

# Have You Ever Made God a Promise

by Bob Phillips

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of keeping our vows and promises to God, and warns against the dangers of unfulfilled promises and the consequences of breaking our commitments to Him.*

**Duration:** 1:18:05

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:106, Proverbs 20:25, Isaiah 55:1, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 11:32

**Topics:** "Promises"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Jephthah's daughter from the Bible. He argues that Jephthah's daughter was not actually sacrificed as a burnt offering, but rather was isolated and visited by her family four times a year. The speaker emphasizes the importance of being careful in making rash vows to God and encourages listeners to release any guilt or bondage associated with unfulfilled vows. He also highlights that while God expects us to keep our vows, he is ultimately after something more than just the words we utter, and desires our obedience and trust.

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## Transcript

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Two scriptures I want you to turn with me and read with me in the very beginning. One is in James 5, the other one is in Psalm 119. James chapter 5, James the 5th chapter, and then if you would just mark that some way, we're going to look there first, and then we're going to go immediately to the Psalms, the 119th Psalm, Psalm 119, and verse 106.

Psalm 119, verse 106. Now if you will mark those, be ready to turn to them. One of the things that I have noticed among Christians, I don't know that I've ever preached a message on this particular subject, but it's something that I have noticed in the body of Christ.

I've noticed it here among some that have come forward to speak after the services, some that have come in for counseling, some that I've just talked with in the hall. And one of the things that happens sometimes to Christians is that they get themselves into a place where they make God a promise. They say, God, I promise you, I promise you that I'm going to do such and such.

If you'll just do this for me, I promise you, God, I'm going to do such and such. And they make a vow or an oath to God. Now I'm sure that I'm speaking to at least five or six of you here tonight that have done that.

And there are also some that make that vow and they don't follow through with it. Somehow they forget it. Sometimes it just kind of slips their mind.

Sometimes it was done out of emotion. Sometimes it was done out of a great trial. The trial's passed and then they make it.

I remember when I was on a mission trip to a very primitive place in Oklahoma. And Oklahoma has some primitive places if you didn't know that. At that time, I had more opportunities to preach than I was smart.

And I felt like every time someone gave me an invitation, I needed to go whether I had anything to say or not. And so I went to this place, not that the place that I went to was wrong, but I was tired. I was worn out.

I was absolutely exhausted. I felt like I got there the night before I was to preach because I was in that area. So I came and I stayed in one of those motels where the name of it was Motel.

You know what I'm talking about. And it had a big red sign out front that flashed on and off and said Motel. And that's where I stayed.

And I was worn out. I got there at about 10 o'clock at night. I didn't have any trouble getting a room.

It wasn't overcrowded. And the first thing I noticed when I went in is I turned the water on the sink and I sloshed some water on my face after I'd gotten unpacked and just kind of was washing up a little bit and had my shoes off. I had my socks on and suddenly my socks began to feel wet.

And I looked down and the pipe was disconnected and part of the water was running straight through. And the floor was covered with water, getting covered with water. I went to bed that night.

And as I laid in bed, I was worn out, ready to get a good night's sleep. And then all of a sudden, there it was. A cricket.

A cricket. Now, I can usually sleep through anything, but this cricket was powerful. I mean, he had subtle lungs on him.

And he went on and here I was halfway through the night. You would have gotten a kick out of it if you could have seen it. But I got me a newspaper that I'd picked up.

I wadded it up. I turned all the lights out and I'd walk to one corner of that room where I thought he was. And I'd wait for him to make a noise.

And I was going to pounce on him if I could find him. And about the time I'd get in one corner, he'd start up in another corner. And we did that for about three hours.

I'd lay down. I'd go back, try to go to sleep for a while. And then here he'd be again.

So I just couldn't stand it. And finally, I said, Lord. Now, this is a true story.

I'm not making it up. I said, Lord, if you will kill that cricket, if you just kill that cricket, there was something that I felt like the Lord was asking of me and I was resistant in my heart, not because I was rebellious, but

because, you know, I use the excuse, I know some of you have been there, Lord, I'm not sure that's you really talking to me. So I said, Lord, if you're talking to me about that, if you just kill that cricket, Lord, I promise you, I promise you, I'll do it.

Well, I woke up the next morning. The cricket went on for a little while, but then I fell asleep. And the next morning I woke up and laying right beside me on my pillow was a dead cricket.

Right beside me. And I remembered the vow I'd made to the Lord. I don't know why the Lord had to put him on my pillow.

But there he was, a dead cricket, on my pillow. What really bothered me was I didn't realize the reason I was having to go to two corners, there was two crickets. I found the other one laying right beside my toothbrush.

And he was dead. And I said, Lord, you know, I've made a vow to you and I'm going to keep that vow. And so I went on and preached about three or four days there in that place.

And went on to another place and preached. And about three weeks passed by before I got back home. And as I got back home, I remembered the vow I'd made.

Now it was time to do something about it. And so I began to pray. Well, Lord, are you sure this is you? Are you absolutely sure? I know the crickets were dead, but I want to know, Lord, was this really you? And the more I thought about it, the more I came to the conclusion.

I won't go into what it was. I remember what it was. It was to go to somebody and to share something.

And I said, Lord, I just don't know if this is you or not. And so I'm just going to wait until I get a further confirmation. Well, a further confirmation never came.

Now, I don't know to this day if that's what God wanted me to do or he didn't want me to do. But I do know this. I know that after that period of time, the enemy used to hit me with that over and over.

At least I think it was the enemy. But I felt a tremendous amount of guilt. I felt a tremendous amount of guilt.

And here was something I'd said, God, I will do. I'll make a vow. I'm going to do it.

And I didn't follow through with it. I felt guilty. Now, I believe that God intends for us to follow through with vows that we make unto him.

I'm going to read to you in a moment two scriptures that seem to be conflicting. They are not conflicting. But there are multitudes of Christians.

Some of them are provoked to make a vow that God is not in. Some have made vows to the Lord that they should have followed through. And they've now forgotten and passed by the wayside.

And God's really waiting to awaken them to bring them back to that place before they're able to go on in growth. And then there's another group of Christians that are under a heavy load of guilt because they have made some vow to God. And they haven't been able or haven't followed through for whatever reason.

And it haunts them. Now, I want us to see this issue of making a vow or promise to God. That's why the title of the message, Have You Ever Made God a Promise? Now, look with me at James chapter 5 to begin with.

James, the fifth chapter, starting with the twelfth verse. Well, just the twelfth verse, actually. But above all, my brethren, do not swear either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

Now, there are those who interpret this verse that say that a Christian is absolutely not to make any oath whatsoever. And there is a truth. There are oaths that you, as a Christian, probably you definitely shouldn't not make.

But when he said, let there be no other oath, what he's literally talking about is that we are to make sure that our oath is to the Lord and that the oath that we're to make is to be solid, steadfast, consistent. Let our yes be yes and our no be no. So that if it's something we have to say no to, we say no and we leave it there.

If it's something we have to say yes to, we say yes and we leave it there. Now, turn with me to Psalm 119, because there's another verse here written by David that seems to be contradictory to that, because he says in Psalm 119, verse 106, he says, I have sworn and I will confirm it. I'm not sure, but I think the King James says, I will perform it.

And that's really the most accurate translation of it. He said, I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous ordinances. Well, you say, well, I understand that because he's saying I'm going to keep your word.

That's what he's talking about in the context that's here. Now, but he does say, I swear I have sworn. And the idea of the word that's used here is David is saying, I take an oath, God.

I take an oath, I promise you, God, that I will keep your word. Now, has anybody ever said, God, I promise you. I'm absolutely, sometimes maybe after a temptation or after a deep trial.

You knew you failed. You knew you didn't come through. And you say, God, I promise you, I'll never do that again.

But you did it. You didn't follow through with it. You say, God, I promise you, you'll never catch me acting that way again.

I promise you it's over. I'm not going to do it again. Three days later, you find yourself doing it.

Now, where does that put you with the Lord? What does it mean about making a promise? How serious is God about these promises we make? I wonder if you just think for a moment. What kind of promises have you made God in the past that have gone absolutely unfulfilled? What have you said to God you do? What have you said, Lord, I'm going to follow through with that. Lord, I'll do that.

Lord, I won't do that. And you fail. You fail.

What does God's word say about it? What's he what's he saying to us? I want you, first of all, to understand that there is in the word of God. A promise, a bond, an oath, a vow that a person can make that is a voluntary consent that has scriptural basis to it. It's a bond of an oath.

It's a it's it's the strictest way, according to Scripture, of making a voluntary resolution before God. In some cases, it's actually presented in the Bible as being one of the highest engagement a man can make with God to make a vow unto God to make a promise unto God. Now, for those who say, well, we're not supposed to do that in New Testament times, Paul did it in Acts 18, 18.

Don't turn unless I ask you to for the sake of time. But in Acts 18, 18, we read and Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria. And with him were Priscilla and Aquila.

In Sincreia, he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow. Now, that verse is there. We really don't know what vow he was keeping.

It could have been that he was keeping a Nazarites vow. The Nazarites would take an Old Testament vow. They would take a vow and vow not to cut their hair for a long period of specified period of time.

And then maybe at that particular time they would cut their hair. They also vowed not to drink wine and so on and so forth. It's a Nazarites vow.

No razor was to touch the head for a specific period of time. He may have been doing that. We don't know.

We don't know what it was. We really don't know. All we know, it is very clear, whatever it was, Paul had made a vow that he wouldn't get a haircut.

He would not get his haircut until that vow be fulfilled or completed. And it says just right there, it says that he had his hair cut for he was keeping a vow. Now, somewhere along the line, he'd made that vow.

Later on in the book of Acts, and I think it's chapter 21, 22, he asked a church to make a vow. And actually he said to them, he said, make an oath that you're going to follow the Lord. He calls upon them to make a vow.

But I guess the most famous vow that is anywhere in the Bible would be Jephthah's vow. Turn with me, if you would, to Judges. Judges.

The 11th chapter of Judges. As a matter of fact, when the Lord began to deal with me about this message, and he began to lay out some scripture for me that I knew that he wanted me to use, he came to this one and I said, Lord, you know I don't want to use this one. I don't like this one.

Because I don't understand it. I think I do now, deeper than I ever have, because the Lord let me see something. But this is a very troubling verse in the Bible.

Very troubling verse. It's about a vow that was made by a man named Jephthah. Now Jephthah is obviously a man of God because Paul speaks of him, or the writer of the Hebrews, if Paul wrote Hebrews.

In Hebrews 11, verse 32, he lists this long list of men of faith. He talks about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel. Now that's pretty good company.

And he says that Jephthah fits in that company as a man of faith. The same Jephthah. But let's read this vow that he made, and you'll understand why it's so troubling.

In Judges 11, verse 30, And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, If thou will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's. Now I want to read that again. I want you to think of that.

Jephthah says, whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's. And I will offer it up as a burnt offering. So Jephthah crossed over to the sons of Ammon to fight against them.

And the Lord gave them into his hand. Now it appears to be here, and that's what makes this verse so troubling. As we begin to read more about it, it appears that the Lord accepted his vow.

And it appears, as we read it, that not only that, but he honored Jephthah's plea. In fact, one of the disturbing things about it is it appears as if Jephthah is making a bargain with God. And you know, some people make vows to do that.

They make vows or oaths to make a bargain with God. Like I did in that motel room. I said, God, if you do this, then I'll do this.

And it appears to be, at first, that many of the Old Testament vows come out that way. Almost have a legalistic sense about them. Vows were very common under the Mosaic economy, under the old Mosaic covenant.

You remember, for example, even prior to that when we deal with Jacob. Jacob is leaving. He's now deceived Esau.

And so he has to run for his life. He's got to leave his family. He's got to leave his friends.

And he makes a vow to God. Basically, he said he's in refuge now. He's running from Esau.

And he says that if the Lord will be with him, he said, Lord, if you'll be with me and you'll restore me to my home in peace. Then I'll take you to be my God. And I will devote to you a tenth of all that I possess.

Now, it sounds like he's bargaining with God. He's saying, God, if you'll just follow through, protect me, deliver me safely home, then I'm going to give you this trade. I give you this, you give me that.

He says, I'll give you a tenth of all that I possess. You know, the tithe, for example, a lot of people have a great deal of struggle over the tithe, whether or not they ought to give a tithe or shouldn't give a tithe and whether the Bible teaches it. We have theological arguments about whether or not it's under the law, whether it's under the New Testament covenant, where it should be, so on and so forth.

I happen to believe that a tithe is something that is there as a binding oath, an agreement that should be made by a Christian willingly from the heart. I say that because the Bible says that God loves a cheerful giver. Why? Because an oath that's made wherever it was in the Old Testament was a voluntary oath.

I believe it's important to make that not only because it does provide funds in the kingdom, but I think it does something in your own heart. And so he was saying, I'll give you a tenth of everything that I have. I believe the reason the Lord asked for it to be with a cheerful heart is because if you're grievously giving it, I don't think the Lord wants it.

If you got to hang on to it and you got to feel like, well, I got to do this out of duty or, well, I guess that's what the preachers require me to do. Or if I'm going to be a member of some church, I got to give 10 percent. But we don't do that here, obviously.

But I don't believe the Lord honors that. I believe if you have to give grievously anything, whether it be a tithe or anything else to the Lord, I think you ought to hold on to it. I think you ought to cherish it and keep it because I don't believe the Lord wants it when he asks for an offering from us.

It's to be a voluntary offering from the heart. And that changes us as much as it changes anything else. Now, sometimes, as I said, these vows seem to take the part of a of a legal transaction, almost as if it were a bargain.

Jephthah says again in verse 30, if you'll give me victory, if you'll give the sons of Ammon into my hand, if you'll give me victory against the Ammonites, then God, what I'm going to do for you is whatever comes out of my house, I'm going to offer it to you as a burnt offering. Now, I want you to think about that as we read on. Obviously, the Lord heard him and gave him victory because it says in verse 32, so Jephthah crossed over to the sons of Ammon to fight against them.

And the Lord gave them into his hand and he struck them with a very great slaughter from Ererah to the entrance of Minoth, 20 cities as far as Abel-Karamim. So the sons of Ammon were subdued before the sons of Israel. When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, behold, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines, with dancing.

Now, she was his one and only child, and besides her, he had neither son nor daughter. And it came about when he saw her that he tore his clothes and said, Alas, my daughter, you have brought me very low and you are among those who trouble me. For I have given my word to the Lord and I cannot take it back.

What a shock that must have been. Jephthah's riding in this great victory. God has answered his prayer.

He's made the bargain with him and he says, God, I told you I'd give you anything. I'm approaching my home now. I made this vow to you.

I don't know. Maybe he was a lot like us. Maybe he was so enthused with the victory that as he approached his home, he didn't even think about the vow.

Then all of a sudden, here comes his daughter dancing and waving the tambourine out of the home and it hits him just like a bolt of lightning. And he says, Oh, no. And here's his daughter.

How was she to know he'd made such a vow? I mean, she's greeting him. She's glad to see her father home from war and from the victory. So she comes out singing and dancing in victory.

So here she comes. It's a troubling verse. It's very troubling.

But the Lord begin to let me see something. Give me some insight. I was struggling and I'll just take you through the process of my struggle.

It'll help us understand about these vows and why this story is there and what God's trying to say. First of all, no righteous man really surely could have made a vow like this. No righteous man, any right mind could have made.

And yet Jephthah was a righteous man. As I said in Hebrews 11, verse 32, he's listed along with such people as Gideon and Barak and Samson, David and Samuel as a man of faith. So he is a man of faith.

Moreover, there's another problem we have here. Before he made the vow, look with me at verse 29. Now the spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah.

The spirit of the Lord was upon him. So that he passed through Gilead and Manasseh. Then he passed through Mizpah of Gilead and from Mizpah of Gilead he went on to the sons of Ammon.

In other words, he went right into that battle with the spirit of God resting upon him. Do you see that? And then he makes the vow as he's going to meet Ammon, he makes that vow. Would a man under the influence of the Holy Spirit deliberately commit a murder? How do we understand this verse? Can a man under the influence of the Holy Spirit, can he possibly conceive that this would be pleasing to God? Didn't the law say thou shalt not kill? Isn't that what he said? In fact, the law actually prescribed that if one should unintentionally hit a slave and kill that slave, that that owner or that master was to be severely punished, even if he killed someone unintentionally.

And even more importantly, we have another problem. Why would God be pleased at this particular time with Jephthah offering up his only daughter as a human sacrifice? You see, the era in this whole picture, the times in which Jephthah lived are times of grievous backsliding into idolatry. Grievous backsliding into idolatry.

And one of the major moves or idols was the human sacrifice of children. So if Jephthah is going to sacrifice her with the Lord's blessing, would he not be, in fact, endorsing child sacrifice? How could God's people tell the difference between the sacrifice that Jephthah made of his daughter? How could they look at that and say, well, that's different, though? No, you see, what he would actually have been doing is encouraging. He would actually be encouraging the people to follow the ways of the nations if he went ahead and did this.

And yet he says, I can't take it back. I've got a vow that's so binding on me, I can't take it back. Now, some people say, well, maybe he was going through Abraham's trial.

You remember Abraham's trial? Abraham was told to go offer up his son. But we're also told that the Spirit of God, that God himself, God, our provision, he intervened and Isaac was not offered up. It would have done no good to offer up Isaac.

What would that have meant? Yet again, it would have just been proclaiming child sacrifice or human sacrifice of which God has no part. So what are we to see? What is this taking place here? You see, there's not the slightest indication that the Spirit of God gave any such order to Jephthah to go offer his daughter. As a matter of fact, the scripture seems to indicate that this was all Jephthah's idea.

It says again in verse 30, Jephthah made a vow to the Lord. He made a vow to the Lord. Now, we have another problem because he says, God, I'm going to sacrifice as an offering on an altar.

I am going to offer as a burnt offering, which was a prescribed sacrifice under the law, anything that comes out of my house. What if a dog had been the first thing out of his house or a pig? You see, that was unlawful. You couldn't sacrifice a dog or a pig.

There were unclean animals that you could not sacrifice. They wouldn't be received by God's hand as a burnt offering. God wouldn't take them.

In fact, the prophet Isaiah even talks about it. He says that if you make certain sacrifices to me, he said, as far as I'm concerned, he said, that's going to be like dog's blood or swine's blood. He says, that's the way it will be to me.

He wouldn't receive them. One of the things that might help us if we think about Jephthah's heritage, because Jephthah was, if we read the whole story, there's not a lot said about him, but he was the son of a leading man, maybe a prince, we don't know for sure, in the area of Gilead. And his mother, if you look at and interpret the scriptures correctly, his mother's called a stranger.

But that word stranger is stronger than that. She was a harlot. His father was a prince or a leader among the Gileadites.

His mother, she was an Aramean harlot. And so when he's born, he's rejected. And I don't know at what point particular, but at some point he has to leave home.

He leaves home and he goes back to his mother's homeland to an area called Tob. And Tob was notorious, notoriously known for its reckless living, its lightheartedness, its wildness. And so here's a man who grew up for a long period of time in certainly a heathen influence or an ungodly influence.

And now here he is back. He's leading God's people. He had married, but he only had one child.

He had no one to take the seat of a son to carry on the family name. So that's his background. Now, if Jephthah, there's another thing that's important for us to hear and understand.

Because it's interesting. Nowhere in this passage. Now, I'd always interpreted it that way to the Lord.

As a matter of fact, I've looked at this thing probably for six years. And I've said, Lord, what in the world does this mean? That's why when I felt the Lord wanted me to use this, I didn't want to use it because I didn't think I really understood it. I'd always read this and I'd always assumed that he killed her, that he offered her up as a sacrifice.

And yet it's amazing when you read through it in no place. Does it actually mention her death? As a matter of fact, it mentioned something else. Because it says in verse 36, so she said to him, my father, you have given your word to the Lord.

Due to me, as you have said, since the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, the sons of Ammon. So you understand this daughter's commitment. She says, God or father, you said you made a vow.

Whatever you did, whatever that vow was, you have to follow through with it because you made it into God and God gave you victory. Verse 37, she said to her father, let this thing be done for me. Let me alone two months that I may go to the mountains and weep because of my virginity.

I and my companions. Now, that's a strange thing. Why would you go weep concerning your virginity if you were going to go die? And then she says, then he said, go.

So he sent her away for two months and she left with her companions and wept on the mountains. And that says it again because of her virginity. Now, you see, there's something else that may have taken

place here.

Before I share with you what that is, let me remind you of one other thing that I'd missed for years. And then the Lord let me find it this week. You may have already seen it, may already known about it.

I didn't. But I happened to find I'd read it before, but it never applied it to this. See, previous to this time, there was already a provision in the law.

If Jeff had made this vow of giving his only daughter and suddenly realized that he'd made a mistake. There was a provision in the law already for him to reverse it if he wanted to. It's in Leviticus 27.

Don't turn there. I'll just share it with you and then you can go home and read it. But you see, if a person made a vow.

As a matter of fact, it says, speak to the sons of Israel and say to them. If a person makes a difficult vow. This was specifically for that.

If they make a difficult vow. If you were to sacrifice it as a pledge as dedicated to sacrifice or dedicated to the Lord, an animal. Or perhaps you were to bring a piece of property to the priest.

And you would say, I'm dedicating this property to the Lord. Now, you wouldn't sacrifice a person. But if you brought a person, an individual to the Lord, you could have brought a slave or someone to the Lord.

And you brought it to the priest. You say, I'm giving this individual to be consecrated, dedicated to the Lord. See, a burnt offering was not just some sacrifice to appease a God.

None of the offerings in the Old Testament were to appease God. You understand what I'm saying? Now, in some in some religions of the world, there are sacrifices that are there. And in their act, they're actually were sacrifices to appease God.

See, they'd offer up these sacrifices and they'd be saying, well, here's the God of the moon or the God of the harvest. And we'll offer all these animal sacrifices. Hopefully, if we do this, God won't be mad at us.

He won't be angry with us. And so he'll bless the harvest. Well, the Israelites had a sacrifice for the harvest, but they didn't do it so they could make God happy.

They didn't do it like the heathen. They did it as an act of consecration to God. They did it as an act of saying, God, I'm making this vow to you.

I'm making this offering to you because I'm setting aside this portion just to acknowledge that we know the whole harvest comes from you. That you are the Lord of the harvest. Actually, it was an act of praise.

It was an act of remembrance that God was their God and he was the only true God and that they weren't going to worship any other gods. So it was an act of consecration and dedication to God. And so it said in the law that if you were to give land or a person to be dedicated to the Lord and then at some later point, you needed that back.

You realize that you needed it back. You had need of it. God's law was so flexible in this that if you gave, for example, land or animals and you needed them back.

Protect maybe someone gave they had sheep and they needed it or goats and they needed it for milk and they gave it to be offered to the Lord. And at some point they realized they had to have it back. And so they would go and that lamb would be valued.

They would attach a value to it. And then one fifth would be added to whatever the value was. And they paid the value plus one fifth more.

And it was given back to them. It was theirs. As a matter of fact, even a person is described.

In fact, let me just read this to you. If it says, speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, if a person makes a difficult vow, he shall be valued according to your valuation of persons belonging to the Lord. If it's a male from 20 years to 60 years, you would pay 50 shekels to get it back, to get the person back.

If it was a female, don't get mad at me, ladies. When I read this, your valuation should be 30 shekels. I didn't write it.

If it was a male that was instead of 20 to 30, 60 years old. And of course, the obvious reason for that is because the male was involved as a worker, brought in more usually in that sense. The male five to 20 years, it was five shekels and a female.

I keep getting in trouble. I just said women aren't workers. My wife's going to get me when I get home.

You know, if it was a female, three shekels. The point I'm making to you is Leviticus 27 makes it very clear that if Jephthah had made a vow to God and he made a mistake and his daughter came out rather than having to offer her as a burnt offering. All he had to do was purchase her back by a ransom.

As a matter of fact, it's called the price of redemption. That's what they called it. There was a provision there that's called the price of redemption.

Now, I don't really know exactly what took place, but it says that verse 39, it came about at the end of two months that she returned to her father who didn't do to her according to the vow which he made. And that's when you read that. We usually think, well, he must have offered her as a burnt sacrifice.

And then here's this part of the verse again. And she had no relations with a man. See, over and over we're reminded.

Now, here's what I believe happened. I don't believe she was killed. I don't believe she was offered as a burnt offering that would have not been pleasing to the Lord.

But somehow during this two month period, there are other provisions in the law. One of the things that he did was he he wasn't going to offer to God that which cost him nothing. He wasn't going to renege on the vow he'd made with God.

Jeff, I wasn't going to put, but he committed his daughter and his daughter willingly committed herself to a lifetime of virginity to where she would have no children. Now, that may not mean much to us. But in that particular time, that was great shame.

It was a tremendous shame for a woman not to have children. You remember Hannah? You remember when when she was taunted and taunted and taunted by the other woman and kept saying because she had no child. And finally, she cried out to God and she said, God, deliver me from the shame from this.

And of course, she had Samuel. You see, she she was in torment. It says that she was deeply tormented because she had no child.

Now, of course, that's not the case today. There are people that cannot. But and the reason for that is because they believe that they just might be the ones that brought forth the promised seed, the one that brought forth the Messiah.

Well, we don't have to bring him forth now. He's already here. So it was considered a great shame to do that.

So apparently what happened was rather than offering her as a burnt offering, they committed her to a lifetime of no marriage. Of course, no children and her virginity. As a matter of fact, it became a custom in Israel.

It says in verse thirty nine and in verse 40, it says that the daughters of Israel went yearly to commemorate the King. James uses another word. What is it? The lament to lament the daughter of Jephthah, the Gileadite, four days in the year.

So four days out of every year. That's what happened. They went up there with her.

The word lament or commemorate is a word that literally means to talk with. To talk with. So I don't believe she was dead because they don't talk to the dead.

And so she was there. They went there four times a year. Apparently she was at a place where she was isolated.

And four times a year they went to talk with her. Now, I believe that's what's being taught here. I don't believe she was offered as a burnt offering.

I don't believe God would have accepted it. So why did God put it in here? There's a story here for us. Very important.

There's some very important lessons. Now, first of all, here's the first lesson. Be careful in making rash vows.

Be careful. Be careful about saying, God, I promise you I'll follow through. If you'll do this for me, I'll do that for you.

First of all, understand God does not strike up bargains. He will never do anything that was against His already predetermined will. You're not going to offer something to God.

God, I'll give you this. I'll do this for you. I'll do that for you.

You're not going to do that. And God receive it and then perform the vow for you simply because you talked Him into it. Or because you made Him a deal He couldn't refuse.

He's not moved by that. No. What God is saying to us in this story, though, is be careful.

Don't be caught like a Jephthah. Don't put yourself out there and say, God, I'm going to do that. Don't be moved on in some service here in Times Square Church and come to the altar and say, God, okay, if you'll just set me free, if you'll just do this for me, if you'll change my wife or if you'll change my husband or Lord,

if you'll do this for me, if you'll provide a job for me, if you'll take care of this mess I'm in.

God, I promise you, I'm going to serve you. I'm going to work at the upper room for the next six years. Don't make a rash vow unto God.

First of all, it's important to God. When you speak forth a vow to God, it's important. Now, secondly, I want you to hear me.

There are some vows better not kept. There are some vows that are better not kept. Herod made one.

Herod made a vow. It'd been better off if he hadn't kept it. It haunted him, brought him to hell.

He made a vow that he would give to the daughter of Salome, give half of his kingdom. He said, I'll give you half of everything I have. Oh, no, he said, I'll do anything you ask me to do up to half my kingdom.

Isn't that what he said? Anything you ask me to do up to half my kingdom. Oh, how shocked he was. I can imagine he's thinking about, boy, she's going to take that beautiful piece of property over there.

That's probably what she's going to want. Or no, she's going to want X number of dollars or whatever, but I'm willing to do it. He was so enamored with her dancing.

Oh, how shocked he must have been when she came to him and she said, as her mother had worked it out, because her mother didn't like how John the Baptist was trying to interfere with her illicit sex life. And so he says, she says to him, I want the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Now tell me, should he have followed through with that vow? Absolutely not.

Some vows are better off undone. There are some vows you've made to God. You shouldn't have made them.

You shouldn't have made them. Now there's another one. There were 40 conspirators.

You read in the book of Acts 40. They made a vow. They swore they wouldn't rest.

They wouldn't drink and they wouldn't eat until they killed Paul. It's a long fast. That man's still alive.

Now, they shouldn't have followed through with that vow. There are vows that shouldn't have been made. Now, the reason I'm saying this to you, because first of all, I'm going to go ahead and say it.

I didn't. I'm not preaching this message for this reason, but I'm going to say it because we've had people. There are television evangelists that will tell you that you need to make a vow.

And if you don't pay that vow, if you don't pay that vow, God's going to get you. You'll never have blessings with God. And I'm preaching it because we've had people we've dealt with at the altar.

We've had people that we've talked with who dealt with it. In fact, there was one lady not too long ago. Well, it's been six months, I guess, maybe four, that came forward and she had an envelope.

And I didn't see. There was nothing written on the back. It was the back of the envelope.

And she set it down and she said, I've made a vow. I want you to pray over this vow with me. And pray.

What's happening here? I'm speaking to myself. OK. I came to preach to you, not to me.

Now, I've already been through this. And so she said, I want you to pray with me. Now, I'm not saying this is a criticism.

But she said, I want you to pray with me because I'm going to send I'm going to send this vow in. And I want God to do such and such in relationship to I think it was a son. And I said, let me see the front of the envelope.

And I turned it over. And sure enough, it was exactly what I thought it was. This particular ministry, this particular evangelist has said, you send your vow.

In fact, he uses scriptures like this, like Job 22, 27, that says you will pray to him and he will hear you and you will pay your vows. Or he takes it literal. You pay your vows.

You make a vow with your mouth and then you pay for it. I'm serious. That's exactly what he means.

And it is not somebody that's not well-known. This is a well-known man. This is the end of side one.

You may now turn the tape over to side two. Yes, he's five five. Better it is that thou shouldst not vow than vow and not pay.

Matter of fact, he sent that verse out to a lady that we know that this ministry is dealt with in Texas, where there was a lady that owned a her mother owned a boutique. A clothing boutique. And she wanted, I think it was her marriage restored.

And and she was watching this television program. And the individual said on the television, this minister said, well, you make a vow. And God is telling me there's somebody out there that wants their marriage restored.

And if they'll make a vow of a thousand dollars a month and pay that vow, God will hear that prayer and he will answer you. And so she decided that's what she do. So she started sending in a thousand dollars a month until she didn't have a thousand dollars a month.

And then she started stealing it from her mother's boutique in order to pay the vow. Well, her mother found out about it and so wrote the ministry a letter and said. This is the problem, and I'm sure you'll want to write my daughter and tell her that what she's doing is wrong.

The letter she got back had in it Ecclesiastes five five. Better it is that thou shouldst not vow than vow and not pay. And they said, we can't.

She made the vow voluntarily. We can't. I want to tell you something.

That's abominable. That's absolutely abominable. I told this lady is the same ministry.

And I said, lady, I didn't tell her the story. But I said, I can't pray for that. And she got very upset with me.

You know, I don't think I don't see a sense in praying to something ungodly pretending. And I want you to understand if you come to me to pray for that ministry or some of those ministries, you can get mad at me as much as you want. But I don't.

I can't pray in faith for one thing. So why ask me? And secondly, I don't think it does any good to pray to something that's ungodly. I can't do it.

And she got very upset with me. She said, are you saying that it won't work? I said, I wish I could. I wish I could say it wouldn't work.

I wish I could say to you that it won't work because then you would know. But the tragedy is sometimes it does work. Sometimes you get what you want.

The problem is the source that it comes from. It doesn't all come from God. See, listen.

Listen, don't make those vows and have to pay for them. That's not what that means. It doesn't mean that.

Oh, I'll tell you something. You don't make a vow to God and say, OK, God, I'm going to bargain with you. So I'm going to pay two hundred fifty dollars for this vow.

See, Jeff, I didn't have to sacrifice his daughter. It's a burnt offering. There was a purchase price.

There was a ransom price. In fact, let me read it to you. This is the best.

Vindicate me. Vindicate me, O Lord. Wait a minute, that's that's not the one I want.

Here it is. Listen to me, O islands and pay attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother.

He named me. When I keep reading the wrong verse, you must have needed that one. Here it is.

Oh, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters and you have no money. Come by and eat. Come by wine and milk without money and without cost.

And why do you spend money for that which is not bread and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me. Eat what is good and delight yourself in abundance. Now, here's what I'm saying to you.

If you've made a vow to God, if you've made a vow to a man or to a ministry, but particularly if you've made a vow to God and you're living under some kind of guilt because you've not been able to perform that vow, and you're living under this heavy pressure, or if you've made a vow to God and you wish you hadn't made it, and yet I feel, I don't know why I feel it so strongly, I feel there are those here tonight that have made a vow. God didn't require it of you. He didn't ask it of you.

But you made it just like Jephthah. You rashly said, God, if you do this for me, I'll do that for you. And your life has been a mess.

Things have not been working out. And the devil keeps reminding you and reminding you and reminding you over and over and over of this vow you made. And he's not telling you there's a purchase price.

There's a price of redemption. Jesus has paid the price. And if you fail in the vow, I didn't say it wasn't important to follow through with the vow, but my friends, if you fail in a vow, you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you come without cost, without anything to bring to God, and you lay the guilt down, and you say, Lord, I have failed in this vow, I'm asking you to deal with me afresh and anew.

But you don't carry the guilt of the vow. Let God release you from that this evening. Now, the second thing that's really important, because I think in the lessons that God would give us in a vow, God honored Jephthah.

He honored him. He gave him victory. He says he gave him victory.

He handed the Ammonites right into his hands. God expects us to keep our vows. Deuteronomy 4.23 says, Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God.

But now listen. Listen. Here's what God's after.

In 2 Chronicles 30, let me just read it to you. In fact, you can turn there with me if you want. No, let me just read it to you very quickly.

2 Chronicles 30, it says in verse 7 and 8, And do not be like your fathers and your brothers who were unfaithful to the Lord of their fathers, the Lord God of their fathers, so that he made them a horror as you see. Now listen to this part. Do not stiffen your neck like your fathers, but yield to the Lord and enter his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever, and serve the Lord your God, that his burning anger may turn away from you.

If you've made a vow to God, God intends you to keep it. But he's after something more than the words you uttered. You see, there are people that have made a vow to God and they live under this cloud of not knowing what to do because they didn't fulfill the vow.

They find themselves without strength to fulfill the vow or the oath or the promise, and so they sit there in bondage thinking, God, there's no place to turn. I can't please you, I can't walk on with you until I do this, and I can't do it. I can't fulfill it.

I know you asked it of me, I know I said I would do it, but I can't fulfill it. God says, here's what I'm after. Don't be stiff-necked.

Yield to the Lord and enter His sanctuary. There's a purchase price available for you. There's a redemption even for that failure.

Are you hearing me? There's a redemption for the failure of a vow that's made to God. His name is Jesus. He's even covered that provision.

And He says, you enter the sanctuary. He says, yield to me. You know what it literally means? It means strike the hand.

It's a covenant term. When you strike the hand, it means reach out your hand to me. Make covenant with me.

Reach out to me. You see, you know what God's after? You know what He's literally saying here? He's saying, give the Lord your hand. Reach out.

If you've failed in something, give Him your hand. Reach out to Him now. Choose Him for your portion.

Give up yourself to be the Lord's right now. Forget the failure of the vow. That's not what He's after.

He doesn't want some failure hanging over you. He's saying, you come to Me now. Lift the hand out and I'll meet it with My hand.

I'll pull you from where you are. Strike your hand with Mine. Strike them together.

Make covenant with Me. Make Me your portion. Paul said it this way in Acts 11.

He exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. If you have failed in some vow you've made to God, God is not going to hold some cloud over you. He's not going to hold some curse over you.

He wants you to cleave unto Him. He wants your heart. You see, if He can get your heart, if the vow's important, He can renew the vow in you.

Or if He can turn your heart to Him and you can get the freedom to love Him and to worship Him and come back to Him, He can then begin to do a work in you that that vow will be fulfilled. God has His ways. Jeremiah 30 verse 21 says, Who engages His heart to draw nigh unto Me.

See, that's what God's after. It's not the speaking of a vow. He's after the heart being engaged in drawing nigh to God.

That's why He wanted you to make it in the first place. Are you hearing what I'm saying? Now, when do you make a vow? When should you make a vow? When's it good to make a vow? Let me remind you of some things. First of all, it's good to make a vow to God to keep from forgetting.

2 Peter 1 describes the people and says, They forgot that they were purged from their former sins. You know, there are many people that have forgotten they've been cleansed. They've forgotten it.

Oh, if you remind them and you ask them, but they go day after day. 2 Chronicles 15 talks about a people, they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and soul, and they swear unto the Lord. They made a covenant to seek Him.

Now, here's what I want to say to you. Not only should you not make a vow rashly, don't make a vow with words only. Make sure you commit yourself to seeking God with all your heart.

Because He's still after the heart more than He is the vow. See, you can make a vow that you think, God, how many have ever been a place, and you thought that was exactly what God was requiring of you, only to find out that was what you were requiring of you and not what God was requiring of you. You see, God wants the heart.

Don't ever make a vow unless you promise to seek after God. Oh, that applies to this altar too. Or any other altar.

See, there's no magic formula in just coming to an altar. That's all right. That's all right.

They'll handle that. They'll handle that. If He needs help and He's wanting help, He'll be ministered to.

He'll be ministered to. He won't just be thrown out on the streets. If He needs help, He'll be ministered to.

What I'm stressing to you is that God wants you out from under this curse, this heaviness of some promise that you've made that you have not fulfilled. And oh, I've seen it hang. I've seen it so thwart going forward after Jesus because there's a sense of guilt.

There's a sense of uncomfortableness. There's a sense that I can't fulfill anything before God. You see, God says, seek Me.

Now, as I'm talking about the altar, you know it does no good to come to the altar and just say, well, I'm going to try you, God. I'm going to come down there and if you touch me, if a lightning bolt hits me, if something happens, everything will be... You know, when you come to this altar, you come and you make a vow to God. You say, God, I heard Your Word.

I'm convicted of what was said. I've got something in my heart, in my life that needs to change. But God, I'm coming.

I'm coming because I'm dependent upon You. You're my answer. And I'm doing something, Lord.

I'm coming because I am making a vow to You, not a promise, and I've seen it on faces. It's almost as if when you start praying for them, not many, but some will be looking up almost to God saying, God, I'm going to try my best to promise You this. I sure hope I can follow through.

Listen, that's not the place to be making a promise to God that you're going to follow through with something. It's an act of faith. You make a commitment to say, God, I'm going to seek You with all my heart.

You can't just make God promises you're going to follow through on something. You have to say, God, here's the promise I'll make You. I'm going to seek after You.

Oh, you see, there's no vow that's ever made in light of your own performance. Because as sure as you make it, my friends, you're going to fail. You don't only have the devil working against you.

You've got God working against you. Because God is not intending you to prove to Him how powerful you are or how strong you are or how well you can carry forth with the promise. God wants you dependent upon Him.

He wants you leaning upon Him with all your strength. There's another reason to make a vow before God. Believe it or not, you can make a vow to God for the removal of certain hindrances and certain sins.

Now, not a promise to God that says, God, I promise you I'm never going to do it again. I won't ask you to hold your hand up. But you'd be shocked at how many hands would go up if we would be honest and say, Yes, I said to you, God, I promise you I'll never do it again.

But Job in Job 31.1 said, I made a covenant with my eyes. You know what he means? He says he bound himself. He bound himself by his own words, by his own vow.

He purposed in his heart to guard his senses and to take heed in his heart that his eyes wouldn't bring some kind of strange fire down into his heart. He made a vow to God. He said, I made a covenant with God, with my eyes.

See, if you've got something that keeps plaguing you and keeps holding on to you, you're promising God you're never going to do it again. It's not going to get you anywhere. But you can say, God, I make a covenant with You.

I'm going to seek You. I'm going to keep seeking You and seeking You and seeking You. I do not purpose to fail, but if I should fail every day for the next year, it doesn't matter, God.

I'm coming after You because You're all I want. And I make a vow in my heart, God, I'll not stop coming to You. You see, that's a vow to seek God with your heart.

Now, there's another place to make a vow, and follow with me quickly. Turn with me to Psalm 66. Psalm 66.

Another place to make a vow. Psalm 66. Here's a good place to make a vow, believe it or not.

Psalm 66, verse 13. I shall come into thy house with burnt offerings. I shall pay thee my vows which my lips uttered and my mouth spoke when I was in distress.

Oh, you know, it's important when you're in distress to make a vow to God. Now, again, I didn't say you promised God, God, as soon as I get out of this mess, I'm going to do such and such for you. No, let me tell you something.

Anytime you make a vow, you make it for the present, not for the future. If you make it for the future, it'll get cold. You make it for the present.

You don't ever say, God, as soon as I get out of this, then I'll do this. No, you make a vow to God, you make it for the present. You know what'll happen if you make it for the future? You won't count the cost.

Before long, the reason you're making that vow, believe it or not, is the Spirit of God is moving upon you to let you know that Jesus is your redemption and your purchase price, and He's your only hope. And the Spirit of God's moving on you. You make a vow, God, if you do this, one day I'm going to do this, you will elude the workings of the Holy Spirit in your own life.

You'll put them off. No, you make a vow to God. You make it for the present right then.

Something you can follow through with right then. You make it in time of distress. Why? So that God will come through? No, it's a way of committing to God.

Oh, you know what happens to distress? You're in the middle of distress. You're in the middle of trouble. And suddenly, you renew your vows to God to love Him.

Just to love Him. You feel a love poured out to Him, and you vow, God, in the middle of this mess, in the middle of this mess, I'm going to love You. And you make that vow to God.

Your distress gets mighty small. And God begins to enlarge Himself before your eyes. You get a vision of the Lord.

There's another. When God brings some special mercy to you. Oh, what a time to make a vow to God.

The love of God is being poured in your heart, and you make a vow at a special time of mercy. But let me remind you something. God says, count the cost.

Don't make a vow to God unless you count the cost. The Scripture says in Proverbs 20, 25, it's a snare for a man to say rashly, it's holy, and after the vow, to make an inquiry. It's a snare.

It's a snare. It's a snare to just out of emotion, like a Jephthah, say, yes, God, I'm going to do that. To make it with your lips and not your heart.

The Bible speaks of a man who went out to build a tower, but he didn't count the cost. It speaks of a man who went out to face an army, but he didn't count the cost. And on the way to the battle, he made terms of compromise.

See, if you don't count the cost of what you vow unto the Lord, you're going to find that the building can't be completed, and the next thing that happens is you're going to compromise. Now, I'm going to close with one other thing about a vow that's important to God. Any vow you make to God, any vow you make to God, any vow you make to God, you make it on the basis of His covenant of grace and not on the basis of your own ability.

You make a vow to Him on the basis of His covenant of grace. You say, Pastor Bob, what do you mean? Simply this, not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from the Lord, from God. You make the vow unto Him.

God says this. This is what I want from you in 2 Corinthians 1. He said, all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea and amen. And He said, I have an anointing for you.

I have a seal for you. I have a pledge of inheritance for you. I have the Holy Spirit to see that there's strength to carry forth the vow.

Oh, you see, you don't make it in your own strength. You make it in the power of God. And I want to share one last Scripture with you and then I'm closing.

It's in Psalm 56. Would you turn there? Psalm 56. David made a vow to God.

And I want to close with this. Here's what making a vow to God means. This is what you're doing when you're making a vow to God.

You're not making a bargain with God. You're not making a promise to God that says, God, I promise if you do this, I'll do that. You're not making a vow or a promise of something that you're going to carry through with so that God will know you're serious.

No, that's not a vow. A vow can be summed up in one word. A declaration of saying, God, I trust You.

I trust You. That's what the word vow means as it's used in Scripture. Verse 11, In God I have put my trust.

I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me? Thy vows are binding upon me, O God. I will render thank offerings to Thee, for Thou hast delivered my soul from death, indeed my feet from stumbling, so that I may walk before God in the light of the living.

You know what kind of vow God wants from you and expects from you? Oh, it's to offer thanks to Him. It's to trust Him. Oh, if it's in time of distress, if you've received a great mercy, or if you're having difficulty with something, God says, here's what I want you to do.

I want you to enter into My sanctuary. I want you to realize that I have paid the price for all of your failure, and I want you to start thanking Me. I want you to start receiving Me and seek with all your heart after Me.

That's what He's asking us to do. I want to pray tonight for those that have made a vow and you're living under some kind of bondage. The devil somehow is pressing it upon you that somehow you're not going to fulfill it.

You can't fulfill it. It might have been a rash vow that you made at the spur of a moment. It might be a vow that you made and thought about quite some time, but somehow you haven't been able to follow through with it.

You have not been able to do it. And the devil keeps reminding you of the failure. There's a cloud hanging over you.

I sense there are those that need to be set free from that. You may be experiencing a deep, deep difficulty, like a headwind in your Christian life. Now, my friends, listen to me, because there's another category.

It could be that there's a vow you've made to God that you know He expects you to follow through with. And you've tried to lay it aside. It's not a guilt that's there.

It's not a condemnation that's there. It's a conviction. It's a conviction and you know it's God.

But you've either been trying to do it in your own strength or you've tried to put it off. I want you to get released into the freedom of performing that vow tonight. Would you stand with me? Would you stand with me? Lord, You know those that have been bound by the guilt of a vow.

Father, it may have been so long ago they even forgot what it was, but I ask You by the power of the Holy Spirit to bring it to remembrance. I ask that this be a night of liberation, of absolute liberation, God, in Jesus' name, that there be bondages that be broken. Lord, those that have been stumbling and have not been able to fulfill vows and yet they feel so guilty, they've made them over and over, God, they may be truthful vows and they may be right vows and maybe there are things that they should be doing, but Lord, the fact that they've failed so many times is hindering them.

I ask You, Lord, to bring them into Your sanctuary. Let them know it's the seeking after Your heart. You've had a redemption price to pay for that failure and You're going to set them on the right course.

Lord, speak to that heart. And then, Lord, to those that have made a vow and they've not followed through. I don't know what it is, but I know there's some here.

Made a vow, they've not followed through. Lord, show it to them. Let them see it and then let them come with a new strength and resolve to carry it forth and minister, minister, Lord, a strength and an anointing to carry it forth.

Lord, those vows that have been so far out in the future that they keep making, Father, I ask You to bring repentance to that tonight and then grant, Lord, Your way to them in Jesus' name. I want You to come as we sing right now. Would you slip out of your seat? You come.

I want to pray for you. Holy Spirit is speaking to you about it. You'll know if you're one that's being talked to because the Holy Spirit will be making it clear.

You're bound and you need to be set free from it. Or you need to follow through with the commitment. But I want you to come right now to the altar.

We're going to pray. In the balcony, on the main floor, right now. Would you come? With all my heart I will walk in Your ways With all my heart I will follow after You With all my soul I will praise You, O Lord With all the strength that You have given me I'll not be led astray With all my heart I will walk in Your ways You

know, we're going to sing that through just briefly again.

There's something else here. Maybe you're not putting it in terms of a vow. But I feel that there are some that are so bound.

So bound. Afraid of making a mistake with God. That you make a mistake and He's just going to cut you off.

It's not vows that you're giving to God. Not verbally. Now there is a faithfulness and an obedience that's required.

But listen, if you're living under that thing where you feel that the minute you make a mistake with God He's going to cut you off. He doesn't like you anymore. He's turned His head away from you.

His face no longer shines upon you. You can't hear His voice anymore. If that's the battle you're having, I want to tell you the enemy's got something over you that needs to be broken tonight.

It's not God. It's not God doing that to you. It's not God.

Now if there's repeated disobedience and repeated failure even with that, God says I'll bring you back. He's asking you to reach out the hand and take His hand. Yeah, you can't come to God and say well, I can't come with my heart the way it is.

Oh my friends, you're not going to get your heart straightened out before you come. You can't do that in your own power, in your own strength. What are you going to offer to God? I thought you could only come to God when you have clean hands and a pure heart.

The only way you can have consistent communion with God is with a clean hand, clean heart. But you can't get the cleanliness worked out. You can't walk under that cloud that says I'll get it all straightened out one of these days, God.

Now I'm going to follow after you. I believe there's some here that have a dream of one day really walking before God in strength and in power but you're constantly under this burden. God, you just haven't received me yet.

Every mistake you make, you feel cut off. That's not from God. If that's you, come to this altar.

Let that be broken tonight. Let it be broken tonight. It's a bondage.

It's a bondage. We're going to sing it through, just a couple stanzas. And then we're going to pray.

So, God speaking to your heart, you come. With all my heart, I will walk in your ways. I want to read one more time this promise to God.

In God I put my trust, I shall not be afraid. Those at the altar, I just want you to put your trust in Him. Your trust in Him.

Not in your vow. Not in the promise that you made. Put your trust in Him.

You understand the difference? You keep putting it in the promise you've made. That doesn't mean that there's nothing required. It doesn't mean that God is unconditional.

What it means is that you can make the promise. It's just like a New Year's resolution. You have to follow through in the flesh.

You come to a covenant of grace and expect Him to empower you to carry through. It's Him you're after. It's if you failed in a promise.

You know what He says? He says, thy vows are binding upon me, O God. Some of you may be here at the altar and you may have a vow that needs to be put off. It wasn't God.

I'm going to pray in a moment that the Holy Spirit will show you if it's a vow that you made that was not God, if it was a rash vow like Jephthah, that you'll be released from it right here at this altar. God's just going to bring a release and set you free from it. If it's a vow that's binding, I want you to do this.

I will render thank offerings to thee, for thou hast delivered my soul from death, indeed my feet from stumbling, so that I may walk before God. That's what He wants to release you to do. We're going to pray that whatever it is that's binding, you'll be able to walk before God.

If it was a false vow, you'll walk before God in the land of the living. If it was a vow that God requires, you're going to find a new strength and a new commitment to carry forth, not in your own strength, but in the strength of God. And you'll walk before God.

Is that what you want at this altar? Is that what you want? Ultimately, I want to walk before God? Pray this with me. Lord, I put my trust in You. I ask You to communicate clearly, by Your Holy Spirit, this vow.

I'm not holding the vow. If it's a commitment that You want me to follow through in, I want it. I want it, God.

I want to do Your will. I want to obey You. Lord, I need Your strength and power.

Renew that commitment in me. Lord, I lay my failure down. Minister Your grace of strength and hope and power to obey You.

Lord, to those vows that I have rashly made, that I've made without wisdom, in Jesus' name, I release those vows. I release the failure of those vows over my own heart, mind, and life. Right now, Lord, and I come to You, I extend my hand to make covenant.

Lord, I seek You with all my heart. Now, Lord, set me on the right path. Lord Jesus, my sole desire is to walk before You and to trust You in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/28/SID28944.mp3>

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