

# Jeremiah 42:5

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon highlights the dangers of making empty promises to God, and the importance of seeking His will and guidance in our lives.*

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 42:5

**Topics:** "Obedience", "Empty Promises"

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## Description

Chuck Smith discusses the theme of empty promises in Jeremiah 42:5, emphasizing the solemn vow made by the people to obey God's commands through Jeremiah. Despite their sincere intentions, their subsequent disobedience reveals a deeper issue of relying on their own strength rather than God's guidance. Smith warns that many today make similar empty promises to God, often seeking His approval for their own plans rather than true obedience. He highlights that God is not deceived by these promises, as He knows the true intentions of the heart. Ultimately, the sermon calls for genuine commitment to God's will rather than superficial vows.

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## Transcript

Empty Promises

I. The promise that was made to Jeremiah.

A. It was a vow taken before the Lord. The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us.

1. The N.T. book of Hebrews explains that a person swears by that which is greater, and an oath is confirm the truth of what you have said and to end all strife.

2. A person doubting your word may say to you, swear to me that what you are saying is true, and you may respond, "I swear by my mother's honor." or "I swear by my Boy

Scouts honor."

3. In the days of Jesus they had made up a lot of rules as to oaths, which were binding and which were not. Thus a person could swear deceitfully.

a. If you would say, "I swear by the temple of the Lord." That was not a binding oath. But if you would say, "I swear by the gold of the temple."

Then it was a binding oath.

b. If you would swear by the altar of the Lord, that would not be binding, but if you swore by the gift that was on the altar that constituted a binding oath.

4. No wonder Jesus said swear not at all, but let your yes mean yes, and let your no mean no.

B. The promise was to do all of the things that the Lord commanded them through Jeremiah.

1. What a glorious promise that was.

2. It is fraught with great potential. How marvelous to get a group that will commit themselves to such complete obedience to God's word.

3. Their disobedience to God was the thing that got them into their problems in the first place. You feel that they have learned their lessons now, and there is finally hope for these desperate people.

C. They went on to affirm that it didn't matter if it was good or bad, they would still obey.

D. They acknowledged that their problem was their previous

disobedience to God.

E. Again what hope we now have for them, they have learned their lesson, and are promising to change.

F. Have you ever met people like them, people who express a sorrow over their past failures, and promise never to do it again. They often will promise with tears and will swear on a Bible that it will never happen again.

1. I have found that alcoholics and drug abusers are the greatest con artists in the world.

2. They sound so convincing that you feel guilty for ever questioning or doubting their word.

G. One of the problems of being a good con, is that you even con yourself. You begin to believe your own lies.

1. You believe that you are going to stop.

2. You believe that you are going to change.

3. The problem is that you think that you can do it with your own resolve, and that you do not need the help of God.

II. God's promise to them.

A. If they will stay in the land, God will build them up, and they will not be pulled down.

B. They did not need to fear the king of Babylon, for God would save them and deliver them from his hand.

C. God would have mercy on them as they dwelt in their own land.

D. Note that all of the promises are good. Their response should have been one of excitement and rejoicing.

III. Their response to the word of God.

A. It was not that of unquestioned obedience. One of the proud leaders of the people said to Jeremiah in 43:2, "You speak falsely: the Lord our God did not send you to say these things to us, but Baruch set you up to say these things that he might deliver us to the hands of the Chaldeans that they might put us to death and take us as captives to Babylon."

B. The tragic result was that they obeyed not the voice of the Lord so they came to Egypt.

1. In Biblical typology Egypt always represented the life of the flesh.

2. We are told that the children of Israel in the wilderness were desiring again the flesh pots of Egypt.

3. In a typological sense, they were looking to the flesh, for their safety, they were going to trust in the flesh to save them.

4. We are told the things that they were hoping for by going to Egypt.

a. They were hoping not to see war or hear the sound of the trumpets call to battle.

b. They figured that they would not be hungry because of the lack of bread.

IV. Note that God was not fooled by all of their empty promises.

A. He warned them of the calamities that would befall them when they went to Egypt.

1. The sword that they feared would overtake them there.

2. There would be a famine in Egypt and they would die there.

3. That the anger of the Lord would follow them in the land of Egypt. This is to be contrasted with the mercy of the Lord promised to them if they would but stay in the land.

B. Jeremiah told them that they were dissembled in their hearts when they asked him to seek the word of the Lord for them and that they would surely obey it. vs.20.

1. In their hearts they had already determined what they were going to go to Egypt.

2. They really were not seeking the guidance of God for their lives, but the approval of God for their actions.

3. There are so many in that same condition today, they seek God not for His will for their lives, but His approval for the things that they desire to do.

a. If God goes along with my plans great, an extra plus.

b. If He doesn't go along, I am going to do it anyhow.

C. Many people today are making empty promises to God.

1. These promises are often made when a person is trying to make a deal with God.

2. They are made often with the intent to bribe God.

3. I am wanting desperately for God to do a certain thing for me so I promise that if God will just come through and fulfill my desire, that I will do certain things for Him in return.

4. The Bible tells us that if we make a vow to God, that

it is very important that we keep it.

a. It is better not to make a vow at all, than to make a vow and not keep it.

5. It is important to note that vows are not necessary to obtain God's favor.

a. God's grace and love towards us is so great that He is willing to give you every thing that is good for you.

b. He has said, "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."

6. So many times our vows are only showing a confidence that I have in my flesh.

a. Lord, this is what I am going to do for you. How that smacks of the flesh.

b. Peter said, "Lord, those these others may forsake you, I would never deny you." Lord, you can count on Peter, the rock. I will never let you down. Empty promises.

c. Jesus knew that they were empty promises, He said, "Before the rooster crows in the morning, you will have denied me three times." Peter responded, "Even if they would kill me, I would never deny you." So much for our flesh.

d. Vows are often made in great sincerity, you meant it when you promised it, but again the fulfillment was predicated upon the strength of your flesh, you like those in Jeremiah's day

were looking to the flesh for your strength.

D. One last thing about empty promises, they are deceitful.

1. God is not the one that is deceived by them. He knew all along what was the intent in the hearts of these people who were promising unquestioned obedience to His word.

2. Jesus knew that Peter was going to deny Him despite Peter's protests to the contrary.

3. He knew the truth about your promises that you have made to Him and subsequently broken.

4. Thus the one deceived by the empty promises are the ones that are making them.

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