

'When Thou Vowest a Vow, Defer Not to Pay It'

by Timothy Tow

Timothy Tow emphasizes the importance and seriousness of fulfilling vows made to God through biblical examples and personal testimony.

Scripture: Numbers 30:2, Judges 11:31, 1 Samuel 1:11, Psalm 76:11, Ecclesiastes 5:4

Topics: "Vows To God", "Parental Promises"

Description

Timothy Tow preaches about the seriousness of making vows to God, emphasizing the importance of fulfilling them once spoken, as seen in the stories of Jephthah and Hannah. He shares a personal testimony of breaking a vow and the consequences that followed, highlighting the need to keep our promises to the Lord. The sermon also touches on the significance of parental vows over children, as illustrated by Dr. Tow Siang Yeow's decision to fulfill his father's vow to serve the Lord in his later years.

Transcript

What is a vow? According to one dictionary, "it is a solemn promise especially in the form of an oath to God."

One of the duties of a pastor is to accept what members have vowed to the Lord. Recently a sister of Life Church cheerfully brought a gift of \$10,000 for the building of New Beulah House, plus a loan of \$50,000 for the Mersing Youth Camp Project. This she gladly promised the Lord when she was selling her house. The highest price offered was nine hundred odd thousand. Her asking was over one million. When someone liked her house because it was adjacent to his relative's house this buyer gladly paid the price. Hence, the offering from the vendor of \$10,000 plus a \$50,000 loan.

Several vows are recorded in the Bible. One vow was erroneously made. This is the case of Jephthah. Going to war against Ammon on behalf of Israel, he made a rash vow. He vowed to God if He would give him victory over Ammon, when he returned from battle, he would offer "whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me. . .and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (Judges 11:31). This was an awful vow according to the practice of heathen kings, e.g. the king of Moab who offered his eldest son as a burnt offering in order to break loose from Israel (II Kings 3:27).

Now, when Jephthah had defeated the Ammonites and returned home triumphant, "behold, his (only) daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances" (v.34). "And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one

of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back" (v.35). His daughter answered, "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth." This story teaches us the utmost seriousness of making a vow to God. Once spoken it can never be retracted. "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. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. 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?" (Eccles 5:4-6).

But here is another vow, a good vow, not to death but unto life. It is the vow of Hannah. The story of Hannah is a familiar story told in the Sunday School. Because Hannah was barren for a period of time and her husband's first wife had many children she came under her ridicule. So when Hannah worshipped at God's House on her annual visit she prayed to the Lord. Eli the priest heard her prayer and blessed it. She conceived and brought forth Samuel. She had vowed if God gave her a son, he would be given to the Lord's service all his life. The Lord accepted her vow and Samuel became the greatest prophet after Moses.

Samuel leads me to give my own testimony. My mother did not bear any child until three years after her marriage. It was a girl, my sister, when everyone in the Tow Clan expected a boy. When she did not bear after another three years, she became anxious. She vowed to the Lord, like Hannah, that if the Lord would give a man-child, she would offer him to serve Him as a pastor. When I was seven or eight Mother told me about her vow on me. To comfort me she said when I grew up she would send me to America .

In the Singapore Pentecost of 1935, I was so gloriously saved that I gave myself to serve the Lord full-time. This confirmed Mother's vow. After some years, however, I broke this double vow in my attempt to study law in London . In the welter of events, Mother died on the eve of my setting out. Not recollecting my vow, I persisted to go on my wayward journey, but in five weeks my baby daughter of seven months also died. It took two deaths to bring me to my senses. This experience has taught me the seriousness of keeping one's vows.

Now while I am son of a mother's vow, my fourth younger brother, Dr Tow Siang Yeow, is son of a father's. It happened like this. My second younger brother Siang Yew had vowed to serve the Lord full-time, also at the John Sung Revival Meetings, Singapore 1935. When the time came he changed course to study medicine. This "provoked" my father suddenly to call the whole family together and some church members to a special service. With the help of an elder of the Batu Pahat Church my father made Siang Yeow kneel before the congregation. They put their hands on him to consecrate him to the service of the Lord.

Nevertheless my fourth younger brother also studied medicine. He became a doctor and served the Malaysian Government until his retirement. After retirement he underwent surgery three times. He felt the futility of life. When the doctors operated on him the fourth time, he got a clean bill of health. Suddenly he remembered my Father's vow on him. He awoke to the fact that he had not served Him as he should. Now in his early seventies he resolved to fulfil his father's vow. Was it too late? Never!

I know of an old man of 72, a retired Chinese school teacher. His name was Chua Sin Teck (Sin Teck means Virtue of Faith). After the Pacific War he was ordained to the pastoral ministry. He became a very effective pastor until 92 when the Lord took him. He had 20 years' glorious service. So Dr Tow Siang Yeow's resolve to serve the Lord anew at this late hour is never too late.

The question is, "How about you?" Have you made any vow to God? How many times in sickness and in pain have you vowed, "Lord, if you heal me I will do this or that for You"? In your financial distress, in accidents, in times of approaching death, what did you vow? And have you clean forgotten what you uttered before God?

"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. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. 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?" (Eccles 5:4-6).

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/timothy-tow/when-thou-vowest-a-vow-defer-not-to-pay-it/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net