

Doctrine of the Vow

1. By definition a vow is a strong verbal oath taken in the sight of the Lord that a certain action will or will not be performed. There is usually a condition involved.
 - *Genesis 28:20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on. 21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: 22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*

2. God remembers the vows that are made and expects those who make them to keep them.
 - *Genesis 31:13 I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.*
 - *Numbers 30:2 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.*
 - *Deuteronomy 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.*

3. When the Mosaic Law was established, provision was made for the offering of a voluntary offering to visualize a vow.
 - *Leviticus 7:16 But if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow, or a voluntary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice: and on the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten:*

4. The sacrifice made in association with the vow had to be a pure offering without blemish to indicate the sincerity and purity of the heart.
 - *Leviticus 22:21 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. 23 Either a bullock or a lamb that hath any thing superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer for a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted.*

5. Either a man or a woman could take the Nazarite vow which caused them to be set apart from others for the service of God. The obligation was either for life or for a defined time. The term “Nazarite vow” comes from the Hebrew word *nezer*, meaning to be separate.

- *Numbers 6:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD:*
6. During the course of keeping the Nazarite vow there was to be the separation from strong drink and the hair was not to be cut.
- *Numbers 6: 3 He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. 4 All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. 5 All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.*
7. Sometimes a very foolish vow can be made, such as the vow of Jephthah.
- *Judges 11:30 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. 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 me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back. 36 And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon. 37 And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. 38 And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. 39 And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, 40 That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.*
8. Sometimes an honorable vow can be made, such as when Hannah dedicated her child Samuel to the service of the Lord.
- *1 Samuel 1:11 And she [Hannah] vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him [Samuel] unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head [in compliance with the Nazarite vow].*

9. Sometimes a religious vow can be used as a covering for treachery, as in the case of Absalom, who plotted to take the kingdom from his father David.
- *2 Samuel 15:7 And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron. :8 For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD. 9 And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron. 10 But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.*
10. As an act of genuine worship, making vows to God is an acceptable form.
- *Psalms 65:1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm and Song of David. Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed.*
 - *Psalms 76:11 Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared.*
 - *Acts 18:18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.*
11. Only a fool would break a vow made to God.
- *Ecclesiastes 5:4 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.*
12. It is far better not to ever make a vow to God than to make one and break it.
- *Ecclesiastes 5:5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.*
13. It is considered to be lying to the Holy Spirit to promise to do something and then not do it. Such was the sin of Ananias and his wife.
- *Acts 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?*
14. It is not wrong for a vow to be made to God. However, a vow should meet some criteria.
- A biblical vow should come from the heart.
 - A biblical vow should be rooted in righteousness whereby the glory of God is in view while others are blessed.

- A biblical vow should be thoughtful and obtainable.
 - A biblical vow should be definite in scope and easy to be remembered.
 - A biblical vow should be kept at all cost.
15. An unbiblical vow should be confessed as sin and abandoned lest something far worse happen as in the case of Jephthah.
- *Judges 11:30 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.*