

Broken Vows

by David Guzik

The sermon emphasizes the importance of keeping vows to God and the consequences of broken vows, highlighting the need for spiritual fellowship and commitment to God.

Duration: 46:50

Scripture: Psalm 5:1, Ecclesiastes 5:1, Ecclesiastes 5:4-6, Matthew 6:33, Acts 5:1-11

Topics: "Vow Keeping", "Obedience To God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of not making foolish vows before God. He emphasizes that it is better to not make vows at all than to make ones that we cannot fulfill. The preacher highlights the need to be cautious with our words and not to speak hastily before God. He also warns against making excuses or delaying in fulfilling our vows, as it can anger God and hinder the work of our hands. The sermon concludes by discussing the importance of restoring broken vows and refers to Numbers chapter 6 for guidance on this matter.

Transcript

I'd like you to open up to the book of Acts, chapter five. I'd like to speak to you tonight on the issue. Of a hindrance in the Christian life that I think is rarely recognized and is often neglected, and it's the hindrance of broken vows before the Lord.

We'll illustrate this tonight, this principle, by taking a look at Ananias and Sapphira in Acts, chapter five, verse one. We read there, but a certain man named Ananias with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession and he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles feet. It was a time of great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early church.

Remarkable things were happening. Thousands of people were coming to Jesus at a time. You had the day of Pentecost with several thousand.

You had the preaching in Acts, chapter three, after the lame man at the gate, beautiful, was healed and several more thousand came and the work of God was deepening and multiplying extremely rapidly. It was it was a remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I wonder if the early apostles thought, I mean, is it going to continue like this forever? You know, I mean, every few weeks are we going to see a new group of two or three thousand come to Christ at one time? And they thought, man, if this is how it's going to be, then I mean, the whole world is going to be converted in a couple of years.

Well, I don't know if they necessarily thought that it would continue at that same rate, but surely there was something remarkable going on. Now, there's a principle that we should know about God's work is that whenever the Lord begins to work in a mighty way and the devil begins to work in a mighty way as well. As a matter of fact, sadly, there are some people who have experienced this in their Christian life where they have dedicated themselves to a season of extra service, extra commitment unto the Lord, and they have felt a great deal of attack that has come into their life.

And so now they say, well, I'm never going to venture out for the Lord anymore because I don't want to face that attack. That's a very foolish thing, because if you will trust in the Lord and weather through that season of attack, Satan will back off. Satan is a being who knows how to manage his resources and he will not put his resources into areas that will be ineffective.

And so many times when we stand strong against the wiles of the devil and hang in there against him, he will ratchet back his attack because he'll go put it in an area that has more opportunity for success. Well, that's sort of getting off of our theme here. But what I want you to be aware of is that when Satan began to focus his attack against the church, first he started doing it by stirring up opposition from without.

That's what we find in Acts chapter four. Peter and John were arrested. They were brought before the Sanhedrin.

They spoke with great boldness and Satan found that bringing attack from the outside against the church didn't work at all. So he changed his perspective. Now, he said, I'm going to work from the inside of the church.

And what he did was he worked through these two people, Ananias and Sapphira. Now, when you have these seasons of great outpouring of the Holy Spirit and great advancement in the work of God, it's also a time when you would expect God's people are tremendously generous. I mean, spiritual things become so important to them that material things aren't so important.

And when they see somebody in need and they see that they have the things that they could help the other person, it's like nothing to go sell it and do it. It's just because spiritual things just have a much greater priority in lives when these great seasons of outpouring from the Holy Spirit happen. Well, they noticed Ananias and Sapphira did that one man named Barnabas gave a remarkable gift.

It was a large piece of land. And he sold the land, verse 20, excuse me, verse 37 of Acts chapter four tells us this. He sold the land and he brought the money and he laid it at the apostles feet here.

This is for you, apostles. Use it as you will. Well, Ananias and Sapphira saw this and what did they do? It says they sold the possession and he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles feet.

Well, I have no idea what this piece of land was worth. I have no idea what the possession had a value of. Let me just throw out a number and I could be way off in relating it to today's terms.

But let's just say that the possession or the piece of land was worth fifty thousand dollars and they sold it and they kept back part of it and brought the rest to the apostles. Now, let me tell you, let's say you had a piece of land or a possession of some kind, maybe a fancy car or something, and it was worth fifty thousand dollars and you went out tonight and you sold that thing for fifty thousand dollars and you came and brought it here to the church and wrote out a check for twenty five thousand dollars and you kept

twenty five thousand dollars and put it in an account for yourself. Might I say, I don't think God would be displeased with that.

I don't think I would be displeased with it either. I mean, we would thank you for your gift very kindly. The problem wasn't that they kept back a portion and that they gave a portion, the problem was that they gave others the clear impression that they were giving it all.

They came and brought the gift and either specifically said or gave every impression that this was it all. I surrender all is what they were saying, but they weren't surrendering all. Now, how do we know this? We know this from the civic word that Luke used in writing the book of Acts, where it says there, look again in verse two, it says, and he kept back part of the proceeds.

The specific ancient Greek word there that's used for kept back, it means to misappropriate. It doesn't mean just to withhold something, it means to withhold something in a deceptive, stealing kind of way. And so what Ananias and Sapphira did was they sold the land, let's say for fifty thousand.

And I don't know in some way or another, they let everybody know that when they brought that twenty five thousand dollar gift, we sold the land for twenty five thousand. And here it is where all along they had the twenty five thousand that was left over for themselves. Now, I want you to notice something that essentially what they did when they did this was they broke a vow they made before the Lord.

Maybe they saw Barnabas's example of giving and maybe they were being touched by the Holy Spirit. You know, that piece of land that you have, you should do the same. You could see that happening in a meeting, right? I mean, you can just see, wow, this this man has done this.

I needed the Holy Spirit speaking. I need to do the same thing. And so Ananias goes home to Sapphira, goes, God is telling me that we need to sell that piece of land and give the money to the Lord.

And Sapphira goes white and she says, God was speaking to my heart just the same thing. Well, let's do it. And they call up the real estate agent.

And wouldn't you know, boom, there's somebody to buy it right away and everybody's happy. And let's say they get the check, you know, or it gets deposited in their account or whatever. And they think fifty thousand dollars, that's a lot of money.

Wow, you know, we know God told us to give him the money and we told the Lord that we would. And we told the church that we would. Man, let's not.

I mean, nobody knows exactly how much we sold it for. The church is going to be stoked to get twenty five thousand dollars. So so let's do it.

And essentially they made a vow to God that they would sell the possession, give all the money. But they didn't. They broke a vow before the Lord.

I want you to see as well. That their vow was not only a private vow before the Lord. Yes, it was private, it was between them and the Lord, but it was also public because when they came and laid it down at the apostles feet, their vow was made public.

Well, we're giving this all to the Lord, but they broke that vow. It was a public vow. It was a private vow.

And might I say as well that their vow was a voluntary act of consecration. I don't read any arm twisting here. I don't read any manipulation.

I don't read Peter walking through the congregation and saying, I need four people to sell their land and to give their money to the church. Now, come on now, who's going to be the four? There's none of that kind of thing at all. No manipulation.

The only inducement that they had was the power of a godly example. Barnabas's example. This was no sermon on giving.

This was no pledge card passed around to the congregation. Their vow was a voluntary act of consecration and they broke it. They made the vow privately and they broke it privately.

They made the vow publicly and they broke it publicly. So what is God going to do with Ananias and Sapphira in regard to this broken vow? Verse three. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself while it remained? Was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You've not lied to men, but to God.

Ananias, you told God you would do this and now you didn't do it. You lied to God. You can just imagine how shocked Ananias was because, you know, it's not like Peter heard about this deal from the real estate agent.

This was divine communication. Communication to Peter by the Holy Spirit. If you're talking in terms of spiritual gifts, you would call this a word of knowledge.

This was supernatural knowledge for Peter. There's no way he would have known this except that the spirit of God revealed it to him. Now, of course, God knew all about their broken vow, didn't they? Peter didn't know until God told him.

The other people in the church didn't know until Peter told them, but God knew from the very beginning. Now, can I start bringing this home to our life right now? And I mean, we'll do this as we continue to consider this. There are probably broken vows in your life.

Promises that you have made to God either privately or publicly, and you've broken those vows. I suppose that when I first say that, for some reason, the thing that kind of pops into our minds immediately is wedding vows, right? I mean, because that's normally where we would use the term vows. Well, if a person breaks their wedding vows, they've broken it before God, they've broken it before man, and they've broken it publicly.

It's something that needs to be addressed, and God knows about the broken vow. Have you ever had somebody make a promise to you and the promise was important to you for whatever reason? Maybe you're a little kid and your mom or dad promised to give you something or do something. And looking back on it now, it was an insignificant thing.

But back then it was an important promise to you. And when somebody breaks that promise to you, it matters, doesn't it? You care about it. Might I say the Bible tells us that the vows we make to God are important to him.

Think of these common examples of broken vows. Lord, I'll spend more time in prayer. You broke that vow, didn't you? Lord, I'm going to intercede more for the Lord every day.

I'm going to give you 15 minutes, 20 minutes, half hour, whatever you said of intercession for other people. Lord, I'm going to do more devotional reading every day. I'm going to spend my time with you.

Lord, I vow. I promise no more of this flaking around, God. Every day I'm going to spend that time with you.

Lord, I'm going to get serious about studying my Bible. No longer just a quick verse here and there. I'm going to take some time out every week and sit down and dig into the Bible.

Lord, I'm so ashamed that I'm not a good witness of you. People mock you at my workplace and I don't say anything. I have opportunities to speak up for you at school and I don't say anything.

God, I'm so ashamed. Lord, I vow that I'm going to be a more faithful, personal witness. Lord, I know that I don't give to you the way that I should.

I know that I don't give to you of all that you've blessed me. I don't tithe. I don't give.

Lord, I vow I'm going to start doing that. Lord, I'm going to be a better example. Lord, I'm going to be more patient with my children.

Lord, Lord, I'm going to start being pure in sexual things. Now, all of those are common examples of vows. That any believer might make and any believer might break.

I think what's interesting about this. Is that Ananias and Sapphira seemed completely unaware that they had lied to the Holy Spirit. How unaware? Well, again, Peter said, again, look at verse four, while it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.

Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. I can imagine.

So. He fell down dead in the church meeting. Dead.

Ananias seemed to be overcome by such shock. That it indicates he was totally unaware that he had lied to the Holy Spirit. Later on, Peter says to Sapphira, how is it that you have agreed together to test the spirit of the Lord? Do you think if you were to ask Ananias and Sapphira, are you guys testing the spirit of the Lord? Are you provoking him? And the Lord said to them, oh, no, not us.

But they were, weren't they? You see, their sin was serious and it was dealt with seriously. There's another indication of these times of great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is often characteristic of these times that sin is dealt with more seriously under these times.

You know why? Because God is doing something remarkable, and His Spirit is jealous to see it preserved. I wonder how many people have great sin in their life of broken vows, and they are completely unaware of how serious it is. Let's just yawn.

Yeah, you know, nobody's perfect. Come on now, we all make promises and break them. Blah, blah, blah.

They have no sense. They're like Ananias. What do you mean I've lied to the Holy Spirit? You mean when I vowed to read my Bible every day, and I didn't.

You tell me I lied to the Holy... Well, yeah. You told the Holy Spirit you'd do something, and you're not doing it. Now maybe you should have never made the vow, but the bottom line is you made it, and you haven't fulfilled it.

It's a broken vow before the Lord. We can also say that their broken vow was the result of a work of Satan. You see that in verse 3? Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? Satan worked through a broken vow.

He wanted to attack and derail the whole church into the corruptions of pride and vanity and a phony, egotistical image consciousness, and he tried to use broken vows to do it. See, Satan wants you to break your vows that you've made to the Lord. I think Satan tries to provoke us in two ways in these areas.

First of all, he wants to provoke us to make foolish vows. Secondly, Satan wants us to break the vows that we've made before the Lord. Another thing I want you to see is that Ananias and Sapphira broke fellowship with their fellow believers when they broke fellowship with God.

In other words, let me put it to you this way. Had Peter and the rest of the church lied to the Holy Spirit? No. So here you have a group that has lied to the Holy Spirit, and here you have a group that has not lied to the Holy Spirit.

Had Peter and the rest of the church provoked the Holy Spirit and tested the Holy Spirit? No. So here you have a group that has provoked and tested the Holy Spirit, and here you have a group that has not. Now, do you know what fellowship means? It means you're walking in common.

It means you're walking in sync. And now they're not walking in sync anymore. We often fail to see it this way because honestly, we often see fellowship purely in social terms.

We think of fellowship as just a social thing. Well, I'm hanging out with people. I'm fellowshiping with them.

Not necessarily. There's a lot of social fellowship in the church that never comes into the place of being spiritual fellowship. Hanging around with the guys, talking about the football games, that's not spiritual fellowship.

Now, I'm not saying it's bad. You've just got to recognize it for what it is. It's not sharing of the spiritual life with one another.

That's what fellowship is. It means to share, to have things in common. And when Ananias and Sapphira went off this way, they broke fellowship with the rest of the body of Christ.

Couldn't we say that one of the great reasons why the body of Christ seems in many ways weak and fragmented and doesn't seem to make the impact upon the community that it seems that it should is because in reality, there's just a lot more social fellowship than spiritual fellowship. And the reason why there's not much spiritual fellowship is because there's sin in the life of believers that keeps them from coming together and walking step by step. And a lot of that sin probably has to do with broken vows.

I imagine that Ananias and Sapphira could eat together at the church potluck and have a great time and laugh and talk about the chariot races the other day in the city and all the rest of it, but they couldn't have spiritual fellowship with that group, no, because they weren't in spiritual agreement. Next, I want you to see that Ananias and Sapphira paid a price for their broken vow. Well, that's pretty obvious, isn't it? Ananias paid a price.

If you want to go on, take a look at the price Sapphira paid. It says in verse 6, And the young man arose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. Now, it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened, and Peter answered her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.

And she said, Yes, for so much. Boom! Broken vow. Verse 9, Then Peter said to her, How is it that you've agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who buried your husband are at the door and they'll carry you out.

Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young man came in and found her dead and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

Well, that certainly is paying a price for breaking your vow, isn't it? We plead with God for a great outpouring of His Spirit upon the church. Knowing that these things can happen in times of great outpouring, maybe we should say tonight, Lord, we are thankful that You have not sent such a mighty outpouring of Your Holy Spirit. Oh Lord, we want to see the day of Pentecost all over again.

Do you want to see the day of Ananias and Sapphira all over again? What would happen if the Lord would strike down every person in this room who had a broken vow? I know they'd be carrying me out by my feet. Think about that. Now we pay a price, even if it's not that dramatic.

We pay one in our spiritual life. Let me read to you from Ecclesiastes 5, verses 4, 5 and 6. When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it, for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed.

Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the Messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? Let's say you want to go to the bank and take out a loan.

You go to the bank and you fill out the application. And when they run your credit check, what's one of the first things they look at? When they look at your credit record, one of the first things they take a gander at is how you pay the loans that you already have. You already have some other loans out? Maybe a car? Maybe some other kind of consumer loan? Are you making the payments on those loans? Now, if you're not making the payments on the loans that you already have out, the bank isn't going to look too favorably at your credit record.

Many of us are like delinquent debtors who keep coming back to God again and again for an extension of credit. Maybe that's a reason why so many prayers are unanswered. We come to God and say, Oh Lord, hear my prayer.

And God says, You've never cleared up this thing that you got wrong between you and me a long time ago. You want an extension of credit, but you won't pay off the debts that you've already had. Listen to these words from Dr. J. Edwin Orr.

He wrote in one book, Until broken vows are mended, it is difficult to make any progress along the way of consecration. Before seeking a blessing from God, one should carefully consider in honest retrospect one's previous dealings with deity. It is not enough that no offense was intended.

It is not enough that no deceit was planned in advance. But do you think Ananias and Sapphira intended to offend God? Do you think that they attended to deceive God? That's not how their minds were thinking. They just wanted a little for themselves.

See, it led to a broken vow and it was an offense to God. It was deceiving God. Friends, there's a price to pay for our broken vows.

And I would say that for many, many people, they mainly pay the price in arrested spiritual development. In other words, they're just not growing in the Lord the way that they used to, or the way that they could be. Finally, looking at Ananias and Sapphira, let me say the characteristic of them is that the shock of being exposed was too much for Ananias and Sapphira.

You know, for many Christians in compromise, their greatest fear is not in sinning itself, but in being found out. It's interesting. I mean, if you could just take one sin and I'll just pick something out of the hat, so to speak.

Many men deal and struggle with the sin of pornography. Well, there are many men who commit this sin and they're not terrified to commit the sin, but they would be absolutely terrified if it was known that they commit this sin. Do you see the difference? The shock of being found out is far more terrible to them than the shock of committing the sin itself.

As much as anything else, I would say that the lesson of Ananias and Sapphira teaches us that we presume greatly on God when we assume that there's always time to repent, that there's always time to get right with Him, to get honest with Him. Let's turn back to Ecclesiastes chapter 5. Again, it's about in the middle of your Bible. You have Psalms, then Proverbs, then Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes chapter 5. It speaks to us more. We've already read one segment of this. I want to take a little longer look at this passage.

Again, Psalms, Proverbs, and then Ecclesiastes. Find your way to chapter 5. Take a look at verse 1. Walk prudently when you go to the house of God and draw near to hear, rather than give the sacrifice of fools. For they do not know that they do evil.

Do not be rash with your mouth, nor let your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few.

I go down to verse 4. When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it, for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? We learn a few principles from this passage. First of all, we learn that it's better to not make vows at all than to make a foolish vow.

Isn't that often the problem we make? We make a solemn vow before God and it's something that we really don't either intend to do or it's beyond our capability to do. And it's a foolish vow. Now, here's the

thing.

What the writer of Ecclesiastes tells us is that God will hold you even to your foolish vows. I mean, a lot of times we just think that God is handing out mulligans in heaven. Do you know what a mulligan is? A mulligan is a golf term where you step up to the tee and there you put the golf ball on the tee and you go back and you take your swing back and whack! You hit the ball.

And man, the thing's got a slice on it that just horrifies you when you watch it. And the ball goes, whew! And it just curves right over, you know, out of bounds or into the water or something like that. And guys, a lot of times if they're playing a casual game, they'll say, well, I'll take a mulligan.

And what that means is you count it, it's just you never even hit it. You just tee it up again and hit the ball again and you don't even count a stroke. You don't count the penalty stroke for the ball you just hit.

A mulligan is like a freebie. Yeah, a do-over. A lot of people think that God in heaven just does the same kind of thing.

A do-over. Oh, I made a fool of myself. I need to repent.

A good do-over. God understands. Mulligan.

That's not how it is before the Lord. There is forgiveness for your broken vow. It's readily available in Jesus Christ.

But first of all, you need to come to the Lord and confess and repent of it. I might say another thing about this. I've seen some people respond to this passage in Ecclesiastes and say this.

Well, then I'll just never make a vow before the Lord. No, that's not the attitude. Vows can be good things to make before God, but it just means that you need to take them seriously and you need to fulfill them when you make them.

Let me put it to you this way. If you've broken vows, either repent of them and keep them or repent of your foolishness and ever making the vow and seek God's release from the vow. Say, Lord, this was a foolish vow.

Forgive me for making it. Forgive me for breaking it. And Lord, please excuse me from that vow.

And listen, God in heaven is merciful. He looks at the heart of that child is coming before them in sincere repentance. And he says, I forgive you.

God says that was a foolish vow. You come to me in this humility. I will not hold you to that vow.

Let's sweep it out of the way. I think you need to ask the question tonight. What are you going to do about your broken vows before the Lord? It's a good measurement for your spiritual temperature.

You know, you take your temperature to see if you're sick or if you've got a fever. I would say that when you take your spiritual temperature here and if you don't care about your broken vows, that's a real coldness of heart before God. Your heart's cold before Him.

Your heart's hard before Him. You made a promise to God. You broke it.

And you don't even care. What would you say of a husband who breaks his marriage vows before his wife and you know what? Doesn't bother him one bit. Didn't care.

You'd say, that is a cold-hearted husband. Well, if you don't care about the broken vows that you've made before the Lord, then it betrays a coldness of heart. I mean, maybe for some of you tonight, your prayer needs to be, God, I've got a cold heart.

Won't you touch me? Won't you change me? If we don't care about our broken vows, it betrays a real lack of the fear of God. Last night, we were together with some other folks and having a very nice evening and for some reason, we started talking about traffic tickets. You know, how people get stopped for tickets, or parking tickets, or this or that.

Now, let's say you get a traffic ticket. You get it, the policeman writes it, and you just throw it in the glove box and forget about it. You get notices from the court, you just forget about it.

You can get away with that for a while, but as your glove compartment gets filled up with parking tickets, pretty soon you realize, I've got to deal with these things. I can't just ignore it. I have to deal with these things.

And you go in and you deal with them, painful as it is. Honestly, wouldn't you say that many Christians have more respect for the Department of Motor Vehicles than they do for the Holy Spirit of God? Because God's bringing conviction into their life. A parking ticket, if you will.

God says, here's conviction, you come and deal with this. They throw it in the glove compartment, forget about it. And God sends them something in the mail.

There they get convicted again when they go to church, and the pastor, it's one of those things, the pastor was reading my mind. And what do they do with that? They throw it in the glove compartment, forget about it. And again, the way people respond to God, you'd have to say, honestly, they respect the Department of Motor Vehicles more than they respect God.

Because of the way they respond to conviction. So what do you do to restore broken vows? Let's say, man, that's me tonight, I know I've broken vows. What do you do? Well, let's take a look, finally, at Numbers, chapter 6. Turn your Bible to Numbers, chapter 6. Now, it's interesting, because we have the exact scenario here in the book of Numbers.

The law of Moses deals with this exact issue of what to do when you've broken the vow. Now, the specific vow that they're dealing with here in Numbers, chapter 6, is the vow of a Nazarite. Have you ever heard of that term, the vow of a Nazarite? Well, the vow of a Nazarite was a vow that you would take for 60 days, or 30 days, or 90 days.

And during that time, you would do certain things. You would regard it as a special time of separation unto the Lord. You would say, first of all, I'm not going to eat or drink anything that comes from the grapevine.

No grape juice, no wine, no grapes, no raisins, no nothing. If it comes from the grapevine, I don't have it. Secondly, you would avoid dead bodies and death.

Third, you would let your hair grow long for the length of the vow. So if you took a two-month vow of a Nazarite, you wouldn't cut your hair for two months. And then at the end of the vow, you would cut your

hair, and you'd come and bring it before the Lord and offer a special sacrifice to conclude your vow.

Now, let's say you took the vow of a Nazarite, and somebody fell down dead right next to you. Then what do you do? You broke the vow. Maybe you didn't intend to, but the vow's broken.

That's the issue dealt with here in Numbers, chapter 6, beginning at verse 9. Take a look here. It says, And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him, he means the person who's made the vow of a Nazarite, and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing. On the seventh day, he shall shave it.

Then on the eighth day, he shall bring two turtle doves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. And the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned by reason of the dead body. And he shall sanctify his head that same day.

He shall consecrate to the Lord the days of his separation and bring a male lamb in its first year as a trespass offering, but the former days shall be lost because his separation was defiled. So what do you do to restore a broken vow? I think we have a pattern here. The first thing you do is you humble yourself.

That's what you did by shaving your head. I know today some people shave their head as a fashion statement. They think, well, that's the look and so I want to have it.

It wasn't that way in ancient Israel. In ancient Israel, when you saw somebody with a shaved head, you said, that man is repenting of something. Or there's something spiritual going on in his life.

So that's the first thing you did, was you humbled yourself by shaving your head. And might I say, you humbled yourself publicly. I would say that if the vow you made was public in any way, you should repent of it publicly.

As a matter of fact, if you sense in your heart that your broken vow has affected the spiritual life of others, that it's held back the work of the church of Jesus Christ in some way, then you should repent of it publicly. You should be willing to stand before a group just as this. And say, there's something I'd like to tell you all.

I broke a vow before the Lord. And you know what? I think it's really hindered my walk with God. And I think that it's affected my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Because if my walk with God isn't right, then that affects the body of Christ. I'd like to repent of my broken vow. And I'd like you all to know about it.

So would you pray for me? What would you think if somebody did that? Right here tonight, would you think that filthy sinner removed them from my midst? You wouldn't think that for a moment, would you? You'd say, God bless that person. God bless them for responding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. And yes, I'll pray for them.

It's funny how differently we see ourselves and how we see other people. Secondly, you need to look to your atoning sacrifice. After you humble yourself, you have to look to your atoning sacrifice.

And how did they do that? Well, that was the whole turtle dove thing. Bringing two young turtle doves or two young pigeons. You look to your atoning sacrifice.

And what's your atoning sacrifice? Well, it's what Jesus did on the cross. Say, Lord, I know that I humbled myself before you. Jesus, you paid for this sin.

You paid for my sin of broken vows. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you that this removes my guilt.

That it removes my shame of this broken vow. Thank you, Lord God. You know, your broken vow is a sin of omission.

And it must be confessed as sin before you can have a totally restored fellowship with God and with others. So you say, Lord, Jesus, cleanse me of this. And then fourthly, did you see what you need to do? Finally, I should say.

What do you do? You start all over again. You find that in verse 12. Take a look.

It says he shall consecrate to the Lord the days of separation, bring a male lamb the first years of trespass offering. But the former day shall be lost because the separation was defiled. In other words, start all over again with your vow.

OK, you took the vow of Nazareth. You said, Lord, I'm not going to do these things for 30 days. And after 10 days, somebody falls down dead next to you.

You know, a dead body falls on you. Crazy circumstance or whatever. Your vow is broken.

You humble yourself. You humble yourself publicly. You look to your atoning sacrifice.

And then you start all over again. And that's what you should do. Now, accepting, of course, if your vow was foolish.

If it was a foolish vow that you should have never made, then don't start it all over again. Just humbly ask God to release you from your foolish vow. But maybe it was a good vow that you made.

Maybe it wasn't foolish. Maybe it wasn't beyond what you should expect to consecrate yourself to the Lord. Well, then come back and say, Lord, I'm going to keep that.

Your Holy Spirit empowering me, me looking to Jesus, I am going to keep that vow before you. Finally, and I think that's a pretty clear pattern, right? Humble yourself. Humble yourself publicly.

Look to your atoning sacrifice. And start all over again. Now, let me touch on one last thing and then we'll conclude.

What if I think I've broken vows but I can't remember any of them? Are you like that? That's kind of like I am. It's like, man, who knows what promises I've made to God that I haven't broken. I know they must be out there, but I can't think of any specific one.

So what do you do? Well, you humble yourself. You confess and you repent in general terms. Lord, I know that I must have broken some vows.

I mean, I just know I sense it within myself. I can't think of any one specifically, but I just sense, Lord, this is me. And so, Lord, I confess, I repent, cleanse me of these things, Lord.

I just cleanse me. But then ask God to show you. Lord, is there a specific vow that I've broken that you want to call to my attention? You know, if you ask God to show you, he'll show you, right? I mean, maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, maybe he'll do it next week.

But you just be ready for it. And when God, whoa, I remember. I did make that promise to God.

Oh, Lord, I'm so sorry that I didn't keep that vow. And then you think, was it a foolish vow or was it a godly vow? If it's a godly vow, you start all over with it again. If it was a foolish vow, you humbly ask God to release you from it.

God will do that if you'll keep your ears open to him. Friends, why does Jesus want to talk to us about these things? Is it because he's angry with you and just likes beating up on you and I? No, no, a thousand times no. Jesus, the humble, gentle servant, is here before you tonight washing your feet.

And you know what the problem is? Yeah, your feet are dirty, but up under one of the toenails, there's a real stubborn piece of crud. And so he's kind of poking away at it, you know, and cleaning it out. And ow, ow, man, ow.

Jesus, don't worry, I've got to get this thing out. It'll get infected if I leave it in there. Well, then cleanse my feet, Jesus.

Take it away. The humble servant Jesus is before you tonight, gently convicting you of sin. And you say, well, it doesn't feel so gentle inside of me right now.

Well, let me tell you something. You want harsh conviction of sin from the Lord? Don't even be asking for that. He's gently convicting you of sin because he loves you.

Because he wants to take everything out of the way that would hinder fellowship between you and him. And broken vows will hinder your fellowship. You should confidently expect God to do great things in your life when you set this area right.

Let's pray. Father, we do. We expect you to do great things in our life, Lord, when we set these things right.

And Lord, I stand before these people here this evening, and I confess to them and to you, Lord, that I've broken vows in my life, Lord. I've broken vows made to you and made to men. Lord, I pray.

I pray, Lord, that if there's any specific vow that you want to put your finger on in my life, then, Lord, that you would show me. But God, in humility, I come before you and I say, Lord, wash me clean of this sin and help me to walk in faithfulness, Lord. I don't want anything to come between my fellowship with you.

Make me more sensitive to sin, God. I want to be more sensitive. I want to be more troubled when I'm not walking in the sink of fellowship with you.

Bless you, God, for your great love. Move upon us now by your Spirit.

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