

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Swearing To Our Own Hurt

(Jerry Fite)

David focuses upon the whole man when describing life in the holy presence of Jehovah. He “works righteousness” while “speaking truth in his heart” (*Psalms 15:2*). Living is manifested by what you do. But doing what is right is demanded by the Holy God. Telling the truth in one’s own heart is as important as uttering the truth with one’s mouth. Living according to God’s righteous standard and being honest inside and out demands we look upward, inward and outward as we live before God.

Living righteously also demands fulfilling our promises as we live before God. David writes of the person who dwells in God’s holy hill as being “*he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not*” (*Psalms 15:4*). One is a fool if he swears that he will poke his eye out if he does not pay back a loan in thirty days. Much can happen in 30 days that demands resources be applied elsewhere than paying back this proposed loan. Poking one’s eye out would surely hurt, if circumstances kept him from paying back the promised loan. But would not David’s inspired testimony regarding righteous living demand such?

David is not characterizing the fool and his foolishness, but the righteous man in his promises. The righteous person will keep his oath before God, even when the fulfillment of that promise demands more than what he or she foresaw.

Jephthah made an oath to God when imploring God to deliver him a victory over the children of Ammon. He probably was not thinking that he would deliver his only daughter to Jehovah when he swore the following: “*if thou wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, it shall be Jehovah’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering*” (*Judges 11:31*). When his daughter was the first to meet him with timbrels and dances, Jephthah said to his only child, “*Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low...for I have opened my mouth unto Jehovah, and I cannot go back*” (*Judges 11:35*).

Even if you think Jephthah’s promise was foolish in not considering an only child coming to meet him, you cannot ignore his

soberness and godliness in following through with his sworn promise. It hurt him, but he changed not.

God demands we fulfill our oaths before Him. God, who is in heaven, exhorts man: “*be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God...*” (*Ecclesiastes 5:2*), but we should not “*defer to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou vowest*” (*Ecclesiastes 5: 4*). Our words of promise should be few, but we must fulfill what we promise.

In marriage, we make a vow before God to our proposed spouse. We promise to have and to hold one another “*in sickness and in health, for better or for worse, and for richer and for poorer.*” While anticipating the future in positive terms, we make a promise to hold on to our mate even when unwanted sickness, and poverty intrude, and relationships worsen. It hurts to be hit with unforeseen medical bills, and sudden loss of expected income. Regardless of the hurtful circumstances, we must follow through with our promise. We keep our vows!