

“The Promise”

It's easy to make a promise in the midst of troubled times or in despairing moments. During these periods when we are up against the most difficult situations is when many begin to make promises to God. By the way, it is not just subject to challenging times that we make promises to God, but also when we are looking for His favor for a certain outcome. I imagine that we have all been there. We have come to God asking Him to deliver us from pain, oppression, financial hard times, or to bring us a better job, better health, or a spouse and the list goes on. It is usually when you get to the point that you are the most distressed, cannot take your situation any longer and your patience has run out, that you make promises to God such as “if He does this then you'll do that”. Sound familiar?

“God, if you help me get out of this financial jam, then I'll...”;

“Lord, I can't take my job anymore, please bless me with a better job and I promise to...”;

“Father, I am lonely and getting older, send me a good mate and I will...”;

“Jesus, help me find more time in my day for you so that I can...”

“God, if you heal me then I vow to...”

The truth is that we can go on and on with many more scenarios similar to these. The interesting thing about this interaction is that it involves a promise that is often laced with a sacrifice on our behalf. We promise to do a sacrificial thing for God if He comes to our rescue. This sacrificial thing that we promise comes in many forms, be it being better stewards of our money, giving up the drugs or alcohol, giving up the illegitimate relationship, rescheduling your time to make time for church and fellowship, turning down a lucrative deal, or passing up hanging out with old friends, etc. Whatever the promise we make, God expects us to keep it. Even though, we may feel like the very thing we are going to sacrifice or change will be difficult, God will honor your promise and even return to you so much better and more. Examining the Scriptures, we see this truth at work in the life of Hannah (1 Samuel 1-2:22).

As we read in the passages, Hannah's situation can be substituted for any one of our own wants, needs, and frustrations experienced in times past. Hannah, (whose womb was barren) wanted to bear a son to her husband, Elkanah. While Elkanah's other wife had given birth to many sons and daughters, Hannah was not able to. Now, understand Hannah's troubles. During those times a woman bearing children (especially sons) had a sense of identity, value, contribution, fulfillment, and self-worth. So not having children, and all the while being continuously mocked, provoked, and irritated by your rival (Elkanah's other wife), provided for a very sad, despairing, and challenging time for Hannah. It was in this moment that, *“she made a vow, saying, ‘O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head’* (1 Sam 1:11)”. Hannah had just made an extraordinary and bold promise to the Lord! Think of it. The very thing that she had wanted for so long was the very thing that she promised to give up to God...her son. Is this the kind of promise that you and I would make today? The promise to give up the very blessing that we are asking for and have been waiting for so as to glorify God? Well, Hannah did just that and furthermore, went onto keep her promise. As the passages go on to mention, Hannah, gave Samuel back to God for His service, thereby keeping her promise. As for Hannah, *“... the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters.”*(1 Sam 2:21)

God has a lot to say about those that make a promise and keep it, especially when there is great sacrifice, change, discomfort that will accompany that promise. I believe that He honors when we keep our vows no matter the cost. He will bless us with more than we can ask and in ways we could never have imagined no matter what we give up in the course of fulfilling our promise.

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