

JUDGES 14:1-7
DOWN, DOWN, DOWN!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 14 as we continue our in-depth study of the book of Judges.

We are currently looking at the last Judge in the book of Judges, Samson, the 13th Judge in Israel.

And keep in mind that Samson was a Judge in the western portion of Israel, and he seemed to be a lone ranger. He did not work with the people to defeat the Philistines, but it was a one man show, and usually, in response to something that they did to him and not a concern for God or God's people.

And as we said last time, Samson is an interesting man.

There is no denying that Samson was a man who had great potential in serving the Lord, God called Samson when he was in his mother's womb!

And yet, with all that potential, in all that God wanted to do in and through Samson, he fell far short of all that God had for him because he was controlled not by the Spirit of God but by his fleshly appetites.

But again, that potential was there. We are told in Judges 13:25, "**And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.**"

So the Spirit of God was upon Samson but the Spirit of God did not force Samson to do anything, the Spirit of God empowered him, guided him, but then he needed to walk by faith and follow the Lord!

And, as we have seen, and will continue to see, in the life of Samson, is that he did not obey the Lord, he let the flesh drive him and in the end, it drove him to death!

This morning I am going to focus on the issue of going – ***DOWN, DOWN, DOWN!***

And yes, as we will see, Samson went down to Timnah because that is physically where Timnah was located, downward from where he was at.

But, as we will also see, the Holy Spirit is showing us the spiritual condition of Samson, not looking up to God, but going down, moving away from God!

And for us today, it is a battle as the world is trying to get us to follow them, to be conformed into their image instead of the image of God.

And yes, the temptations are everywhere, but the Holy Spirit is with us and upon us, empowering us to walk worthy of the high calling by which we have been called. The big issue is this. We will listen to what the Holy Spirit is showing us, or will we go – ***DOWN, DOWN, DOWN!*** And the idea is, away from God.

It truly is our choice, and the world will do everything possible to discourage us from walking with the Lord. Don't let them! Let me share this with you because it is a good illustration to show you how easy it is to follow people who are going in the wrong direction.

We are told,

There were 128 runners in the field for the cross-country race at the 1993 NCAA Division II Track and Field Championships.

As they set out on the 6.2-mile run, they were following a course that had been marked for them by the race officials. Toward the end of the course, one of the runners in the middle of the group realized something was wrong.

Mike Delcavo of Western State College in Colorado saw that the main pack had missed the turn. "I was waving for them to follow me and yelling 'This is the right way,'" he told an interviewer after the race.

Delcavo was right - but only four other runners followed him. The rest continued on the shortcut, which allowed them to run a shorter distance and finish the race sooner.

In a widely criticized decision, race officials allowed the abbreviated route to stand as the "official course" and Delcavo officially finished 123rd.

The world does not always reward staying on track - literally or figuratively. But the path we follow is important to God. One day, those of us who have already trusted Christ for our salvation will appear before the Lord for an evaluation of our service.

Our entrance to Heaven is sure - that was settled when we received Christ. But rewards - or the loss of them - for how we spent our lives are not so sure. When we stand before the Lord, no shortcuts will be recognized, and only those who have run the race by His guidebook will be honored.

- <https://bit.ly/32X0fUy>

How true that is and my prayer as we go through our study in the life of Samson is that we would learn from his mistakes, so we don't go down that same path.

These events, these stories are here for our learning, that we, through the patients and comfort of the Scripture, might have hope! (Romans 15:4)

I have broken these verses we will be looking at this morning into four main points or really, three main points and a conclusion that is found in Judges 16:21. This study is broken down like this,

DOWN TO TIMNAH – JUDGES 14:1-2

DOWN TO TIMNAH WITH HIS PARENTS – JUDGES 14:3-5a

DOWN, DOWN, DOWN – JUDGES 14:5b-7

CONCLUSION – JUDGES 16:21

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 14, beginning in verse 1 and let's look at what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word and look at this topic – ***DOWN, DOWN, DOWN!***

JUDGES 14

VERSES 1-2

Now, as we read this, we might not think too much about it. But this is a big deal and yes, Timnah was down from where Samson lived, in Zorah. So physically, this was correct, Samson had to go down to get there, as I have said.

But think about that for a minute. He went ***DOWN*** into Philistine country, some four miles or so.

Keep in mind that the Philistine's were the enemy of Israel and yet, Samson is going down to them!

And here is the spiritual application for us. Samson went ***DOWN TO TIMNAH!*** He was moving away from God and when you are not going up, you are going down, and that is what we see here with Samson!

Now, what was the reason he went to Timnah? What was the reason he went ***DOWN*** into the camp of the enemy?

It was not something that God had told him to do, that is for sure.

Then what was the reason?

He saw a woman in Timnah. Not from the children of Israel but one of the daughters of the Philistines.

In other words, because he was moving away from the Lord, because he was not being directed by the Lord, he went ***DOWN!***

Thus, Samson saw, he lusted, and he will eventually take this woman to be his wife!

This is an important lesson for us to learn. We must look up to the Lord, we must be directed by Him.

That is what Paul admonishes us to do in Colossians 3:1-4, as he wrote, **“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”**

In other words. Since you have come to Christ, since you have repented of your sins and have asked Him to be Lord and Savior of your life, don't focus on the things of this earth. Don't be swayed or drawn back to those things that had you in bondage. Don't open the door to these things, but set your mind on the Lord, focus on Him and let Him direct your life!

Many, many years ago there was an explorer to the North Pole.

And on this adventure, this journey, he charted hourly to ensure that he was still on course. Obviously that was very important to do.

But something very strange began to happen. Even though he was walking north for a long time, his instruments indicated that he hadn't made any progress. And it was really worse than that.

It wasn't that he just didn't make any progress, but he was actually farther south than he had been an hour before! He was actually moving farther from the North Pole!

What was causing this problem? How did this happen? How could he not perceive this happening and not even notice what was happening until he looked at his instruments?

This happened because he had walked onto an enormous iceberg that was drifting south as he was walking north and it was moving faster than he was walking, thus, he was heading south even though he was walking north!

There are Christians that have placed their lives on a moving iceberg that is causing them not to go up, not to go north, but to drift south, to go ***DOWN!***

And, like it or not. Agree with it or not. The only solution, the only hope is to get out your navigational tool and to get off the iceberg that is leading you in the wrong direction!

What is that navigational tool?

I think we all know it. It is the Word of God! The Bible!

If you read the Bible, if you go to church, and yet, you are following the world, you are moving in the wrong direction.

Samson was brought up in a home that loved the Lord. He was taught the things of God. From birth he was a Nazirite to God. Even his mom did not drink any wine or grape juice or eat grapes while she was pregnant with him.

And yet, even with all that he had going for him, he had the choice to either follow the Lord or do what he wanted. And Samson decided to go ***DOWN TO TIMNAH!***

Do you feel like you are going nowhere or even moving backwards like this explorer was doing?

If you do, then there is something that you can do. You see, there is a huge difference between activity and progress, as this explorer found out!

One of the things we all need to do is to grow in our relationship with the Lord. We can't be stagnant. We have to be moving forward.

Remember what Peter said in II Peter 3:17-18, **“You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”**

Peter is warning them and us that we should know these things, we have read them, we have been taught these things and thus, be careful that we don't fall away or move away from the Lord.

And the way we can move forward is by growing in the Lord and we grow by not just reading God's Word but applying it to our lives!

Several years ago there was this person who was not coming to a Bible study and the reason they gave for not coming was interesting. This person said, ***“I have been to a study on that book before, I don’t need to hear that again!”***

First of all, that is a bit arrogant when you think about it. What they are saying is, ***“I have been through this study once, and there is no further point in hearing it again!”***

That is a very scary place to be.

Why is that so wrong?

Think about this. Think about how they feel.

They are basically saying that God has taught them everything that they need to know and thus, there is nothing more for them to hear!

If anyone feels that way, let me ask you this. Do you know more than God?

Hopefully, if you feel that way, you also understand that you don’t know more than God, you don’t even know a fraction of what God knows!

What is my point?

My point is simple. If God’s Word is living and powerful, if it is sharper than a two-edge sword and can cut away the hardness from my heart, then God has more to teach me, more to show me, more to remind me because it is so easy to forget things!

I will guarantee you this. If you feel that you have been through the Scriptures and there is nothing more you really need to hear, to learn, you are going ***DOWN!***

We don’t stop learning; we don’t stop growing until we go home to be with the Lord! It is that simple!

Now, how do we know that we are growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? How do we know we are making progress?

First of all, ***ARE YOU DESIRING FOR GOD MORE THAN EVER BEFORE?***

Remember what the Psalmist said in Psalm 42:1-2, **“As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?”**

Do we have that longing to know God more and to have His life manifested in ours? Or, are we just satisfied with being saved and doing our own thing?

Now some may think I am going a little too far on this. Okay, maybe you feel that way, but Paul didn't, even at the end of his life. He said in Philippians 3:7-11, **“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”**

Paul counted his past life as nothing and he pressed on in the Lord. And he makes this interesting point. He says, **“that I may know Him.”**

Now you read that, and you may be thinking, ***“Didn't Paul know Jesus?”***

Of course Paul knew Jesus. He has known Jesus for some thirty years and he is coming to the end of his life, only some four years away from being martyred for his faith in Jesus by Nero!

Then, how can he say he wants to know Jesus?

Again, Paul knew Jesus, probably better than most people ever will. And his point is this. The more that Paul knows Jesus, the more he learns of Jesus, the more he wants to know Him!

He didn't want his relationship with the Lord to be stagnant or to deteriorate. And that should be our hearts desire, to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

The second point is born out of this first point because I don't think you can manifest this quality unless you know Jesus intimately, that you are growing in His grace and knowledge!

The next point to show us how we are doing is this. ***ARE YOU MORE LOVING?***

And what I am talking about here is that ***AGAPE*** love or that unconditional love that can only come from God. This is not something we can manufacture on our own.

John put it like this in I John 4:7-11, **“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”**

Did you see that?

This love is from God. And not only that, but as God has loved us, John tells us we are to love others!

Are you critical of others? Do you Lord over others? Do you speak of others in a bad way? Do you gossip? And the list can go on, but I think you get the point.

Are those actions that are being manifested showing the ***LOVE*** of God? Absolutely not!

And it is more than just words. Our actions, are the things we do putting others first? If not, then are we showing the love of Christ towards people. We are not and if we are not, then we are not growing!

Another thing we can look at to see how we are doing is this. ***ARE WE MORE SENSITIVE TO AND AWARE OF GOD?***

Think about our schedules. Think about how busy we are day in and day out. And it is easy to tune God out, to be so bombarded by these things that we don't hear from God!

Let me show you what I mean. Right now, in this room there are hundreds of radio programs being played. There are hundreds of television shows going on. In fact, there are hundreds of text messages, cell phone calls that are going off in this room!

Then why can't we hear them? Why can't we receive them?

Because we don't have a tuner to receive them.

But once we come to Christ, we have the ability to tune in the voice of God in our lives, we have the Holy Spirit.

But the problem comes when we let these other things interfere with God speaking to us and we are distracted or whatever to what God is saying!

But as you go through your day, as you are open to God, He will reveal things to your life and that is a good indication that you are growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!

The next one is also an important indicator if we are growing in the Lord. ***ARE YOU DIRECTED BY THE WORD OF GOD?***

Think about our lives before we were saved. We were governed by our fleshly desires. But now that we have come to Christ, we should be governed by His Spirit according to His Word!

In other words, as God shows us what is right and what is wrong, are we listening and not just listening, are we obeying Him? Are we doing what is right?

A good example of what not to do is this. Christians that are living together before marriage. I am not sure why they think God would bless and honor that kind of relationship!

“But Pastor Joe, we love each other and in God’s eyes we are married!”

I can’t tell you how often I have heard that one. Please don’t use God to justify your behavior, your actions. He does not approve; I don’t care what you say!

“How can you say that Pastor Joe! That is unloving and hateful!”

First of all, it is not unloving if it is the truth, and it is. It is not hateful if my desire is to see you get out of sin and right with God.

I will let God speak for himself on this one and this is just one verse. In Hebrews 13:4 we are told, **“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”**

You see, God has told us what is right and what is wrong in His Word and if we say we love Him, if we are saying we are growing in Him, then what is manifested in our lives will be according to what God has said in His Word and not just what I want to do!

Remember what Paul wrote in II Timothy 3:16-17, **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

If you want to be complete, let the Word of God work in your life!

Teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training are all growth-related words. When you are growing as a child of God, you can regularly point to how the Word of God has been teaching you, reproving you of your sin, and showing you how to correct mistakes in your life. You can point to how the Bible has been training you to live in new ways God says are right.

Make no mistake about it, Christian growth in grace happens intentionally, not automatically.

Remember our story of the explorer on the iceberg.

You can drift away from spiritual progress, but you never drift forward. Without purpose and occasional evaluation, you'll eventually find that, despite your activity, you've been carried away from Christlikeness.

The question isn't how quickly are you growing, but rather are you growing? Regardless of your maturity, what is past is past. You can start fresh today and truly make progress.

For Samson, he is on this iceberg that is slowly drifting him away from God and he does not even see it.

It is not because he can't see it. He has chosen not to see it and thus, ***SAMSON GOES DOWN TO TIMNAH!***

VERSES 3-5a

Again, his parents were godly parents, they tried to raise Samson in the things of God.

And even here we see them try to tell Samson that he should marry a woman from the tribes of Israel and not from the Gentiles, not from the Philistines!

And the response to what his parents said to him is interesting. He said, **“Get her for me, for she pleases me well.”**

Did you notice that Samson is not interested in what his parents were telling him! He was not interested in what God has said. But it is all about him, what pleases him and not what pleases God or what pleases his parents.

And Samson gets them to agree with his departure from God, he gets them to side with him and we are told, **“So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah.”** Judges 14:5.

I find this interesting that Samson got his parents to agree with his sin, to go along with him. And we like to do that. When we are not walking with God, when we are going *DOWN* you might say, we love to get others to side with us because it makes us feel better about what we are doing, it makes us feel better about our sin!

And that is what we see here, Samson went *DOWN TO TIMNAH WITH HIS PARENTS!*

I have seen people do this over the years and we probably have all done this from time to time.

We do something wrong and we are feeling conviction and we go to another brother or sister in the Lord and we tell them why we did what we did to justify our behavior and get that person to say, ***“Oh, I would have done the same thing. You did nothing wrong!”***

And, I guess we think that having a brother or sister justify our sin makes it good in God’s eyes! It is not!

I remember years ago, when I was an assistant pastor at Calvary Chapel in Elk Grove, a woman from the church called me and she told me that she was going to get a divorce.

And I figured out what she was doing. She wanted me to give her my blessings in this divorce, to tell her that it was okay to divorce her husband.

The problem was that she did not have Biblical grounds to divorce her husband and I told her that.

And what she told me next was very interesting. She was trying to justify why I should go along with her request.

And to do this she basically said, ***“But my Christian friends have all told me it is okay to divorce my husband, so it’s okay, right?”***

And, of course, I told her that I really didn’t care what her Christian friends had to say about her divorcing her husband. What I really care about is what God has to say about this.

Well, I guess I don’t have to tell you that she did not like what I had to say and really, it wasn’t that she didn’t like what I said, but she didn’t like what God said, but she could not get mad at God but she could get mad at me!

One of the most amusing ones was again back at Calvary and after church there was this gentleman who was approaching the assistant pastors and going from one to one. It was interesting to watch.

He finally came to me with his big question.

He said that where he works is horrible. The people swear, curse, they are not very nice. And I continued to listen to what he had to say. And he went on and on that the boss is bad, this is bad, and he wanted to quit his job!

Now this man had a family to support. And I asked him if he had another job, which he didn’t have. And then I asked him if those people that were cursing and swearing and doing all kinds of bad things were Christians!

And, of course they were not! Then I asked him why he is surprised by their bad behavior if they were not Christians and maybe he was there to be that influence in their life about Jesus. I told him that he should not quit unless the Lord was leading him, and he had a job to support him and his family.

He moved on to the next assistant pastor and he wanted approval for quitting, which he did not get!

Let me say this. If you have to get approval for your bad behavior from another person, be they Christian or not a Christian, you are wrong.

The only approval we need is from God. And here, with Samson and his parents, they were doing what was wrong and they should have not gone down to Timnah.

And I want you to see how things keep Samson moving farther and farther away from God!

Where does he have to go through to meet this Philistine woman?

He has to go through “**the vineyards of Timnah.**” Judges 14:5.

Now you may be thinking I am going too far here, but this was a big deal for Samson. Why was this so important?

Because, from birth, like I said when we opened up this morning, Samson was to be a Nazirite. We are told this in Judges 13:3-5, “**And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, ‘Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.’**”

And now, here he is, in the vineyards of Timnah!

Now what is this vow of a Nazirite all about?

In Numbers chapter 6, verses 1-21 we are given the rules of this vow of the Nazirite. You see, when a person took the vow of a Nazirite, he was dedicating himself to the Lord.

In fact, the Hebrew word for “**Nazirite**” is NAZIR and it means to “*set apart.*”

In other words, he was setting himself apart from this world and focused on the Lord. You were consecrating yourself or dedicating yourself totally to the Lord and both men and women can take this vow that could last for 30 days or your entire life.

For the most part, the vow was a short one, maybe lasting 30 days or so, but again, like in the case of Samson it was to last his entire life! It was a time where you would draw close to the Lord and fellowship with Him.

And the only woman we see taking this vow in the Scriptures was Manoah’s wife when she was pregnant with Samson, (Judges 13:4), but that does not mean that other women didn’t take this vow.

With this vow there were three main things that the person needed to do or abstain from.

First of all, you were to abstain from anything that came off the vine, not just wine but the grapes that make the wine!

Why?

It is possible that God wanted their joy to be pure and not artificial in nature. He wanted them alert to His voice as they were spending time with Him!

Also, you were not to cut your hair but let it grow during the time that this vow was taken.

The long hair was just an outward symbol of your dedication to the Lord.

And lastly, you were not to touch anything that had died for then you would be unclean! This was just showing the purity we are to have before the Lord. And we will see Samson break this one as we read on in our study of Judges chapter 14!

For us as Christians, we need to heed the Word of God over the voices of our friends. And we have to be careful that we are not approving of their sin because we don't want to offend them.

For Samson, he went ***DOWN***, and he not only went ***DOWN*** but he got his parents to side with him and the whole family was going ***DOWN TO TIMNAH!***

VERSES 5b-7

I have called these verses about Samson – ***DOWN, DOWN, DOWN!***

And the reason for that is because Samson is not moving up towards God, but he keeps moving down, away from God.

We see here that the parents of Samson follow Samson's request to get this Philistine woman for him, and they head down to Timnah.

Samson is also going down to Timnah, but Samson takes a little detour, heading down a back road and he is traveling through some vineyards. He knew better, he knew his life was to be consecrated to the Lord, but he liked to live on the edge of serving God and falling into sin!

And this is interesting, once again, to me. Samson is in this vineyard, where he should not be. And what does he encounter in this vineyard?

We are told that he encounters a lion, you might say a roaring lion seeking to devour him!

Make no mistake about it, for us, the danger comes when we are complacent in our walk for Peter tells us, "**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**" I Peter 5:8.

And look at who appears before Samson, a lion.

Now I don't care how strong you are, you are not going to rip a lion apart, he may do that to you, but you are not going to do that to him.

Then how did Samson do this?

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson and only then was he able to kill this lion with his bare hands!

And as he finishes that, he heads back down to Timnah and he is well pleased as he sees this Philistine woman.

You would think that having been delivered from an encounter like this would have been a wake-up call for Samson. But it was not.

He just kills this lion with his bare hands, and again, he has to know it is only by God he was able to accomplish this, and now he is back in sin! He is heading **DOWN** to Timnah!

God was gracious with Samson here and delivered him from this roaring lion. Samson did not deserve this deliverance, but God was gracious to him and did deliver him!

And how quickly Samson put God out of his mind and put the lusts of the flesh back in.

Now, before we are too quick to chasten Samson for what he did, what about our own lives.

Look at all that God has done, is doing and will do in our lives, and as soon as we are delivered from a difficult situation, we go right back to the sin, we start to travel **DOWN** once again!

Now some Christians will use the excuse and say that God is in what they are doing. I have heard the craziest things and you probably have to. When it comes to smoking marijuana, a Christian told me that God made all the plants and thus, it is okay to smoke marijuana!

First of all, it is a mind-altering drug, so no God is not going to say that it is a good thing to smoke marijuana. And if you think that way, then what about cocaine and other drugs that come from plants, is that okay? Obviously, it is not!

Now what is funny to me is that they would say that cocaine is not okay, but marijuana is, justifying their sin!

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

Years ago, an old Scottish woman went to country homes to sell thread, buttons and shoestrings. When she came to an unmarked crossroad, she would toss a stick in the air and go whichever way the stick pointed.

One day she was seen tossing the stick into the air several times.

“Why do you toss the stick several times?” Someone asked.

She answered, “It has pointed every time to the road going to the right and I want to go on the road to the left. It looks smoother!”

She kept throwing up the stick until it finally pointed toward the road she wanted to go.

- Walter B. Knight

Don't do that with your walk with the Lord. You can justify any kind of wrong behavior, people do it all the time. But just because you justified it in your own eyes, does not mean that God says it is okay. Be careful!

Let me share this with you because it is important that we walk worthy of the high calling by which we have been called. It is important to be holy for the Lord is holy. He is working in us, but we can grieve the work that the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives by our sin. We can have our prayers hindered by sin.

And when we speak of sin, we tend to think of the big sins, but sin really is sin. Yes, there are degrees of punishment for the unsaved in regard to their sin, but any sin is wrong. And if you don't think that way, you are justifying it. Listen carefully.

“It was just a little lie!”

“I am not gossiping, but did you hear what so-and-so did. I am only telling you so you can pray for them!”

“Come on, it was just a paper clip. It is not stealing; they are a dime a dozen!”

“Wow, I should have a house like that. I love God more than they do and this is where I live!”

“My parents are so dumb. They just don't get anything and then they want me to listen to them! Crazy, not going to happen!”

And the list can go on, and like I said, we tend to think of lying, gossiping, stealing small things, coveting, dishonoring to parents as little sins. But they are not. Okay, I said I wanted to share this with you, and now, yes, we will get to it. Listen carefully about how deadly something very small can be.

We are told,

I was in an engineering class the first time I watched the tragic explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger. Even though I wasn't alive when it happened, I caught a glimpse of the horror thousands must have felt as the events unfolded.

And the first question everyone asked was, “What happened?”

After months of investigation, the group commissioned to investigate the explosion discovered the problem: an o-ring seal in the right solid rocket booster failed at take-off. I won't bore you with the details, but an o-ring is a tiny device compared to the size of a space shuttle.

It wasn't something huge, like a puncture in the rocket booster or a hole in the cabin, that caused this disaster. It was a small, seemingly insignificant, o-ring failure.

I think there's a lesson here for the Church. What if the big sins, the ones we try hardest to avoid, aren't necessarily the greatest threat to the Church's mission and our joy?

Maybe it's the sins lying underneath, the ones considered “normal” or “acceptable,” the ones going undetected, that are affecting the Church the most. . . .

- <https://bit.ly/30R8Eqc>

For Samson, he saw nothing wrong with what he was doing, but he was going ***DOWN, DOWN, DOWN!***

We also see this problem with the prophet Jonah. God called Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn the people of Nineveh that judgment was coming because of their sin.

So as Jonah gets the call from God what does he do? He runs in the opposite direction. He runs down to the Mediterranean Sea to the port city of Joppa and catches a Phoenician boat to Tarshish, which is an area of Spain. That is some 2,500 miles west of Joppa, as far away from Nineveh as he could go.

Now why was his heart so angry against the people of Nineveh? Why did he disobey the Lord's instructions to him?

Because Jonah wanted them destroyed! He did not want them saved and Jonah knew that God was gracious and merciful and if they repented, He would not destroy them!

Now that sounds crazy but please understand that Jonah had good reason why he wanted them destroyed. The Assyrians were a brutal people. Nineveh was a notorious “*sanctuary of savagery.*”

Not a pretty picture and it gets worse.

Consider what one Assyrian King did to his defeated foes, and keep in mind that this is only one man and some of the atrocities that he did. “*Three thousand captives I burned with fire . . . Their corpses I formed into pillars . . . Their governor I flayed, his skin I spread upon the wall of the city . . . From some I cut off their hands and their fingers and their noses . . . Of many I put out their eyes . . . I formed a pillar . . . of heads against the city gate, and 700 men I impaled on stakes.*”

What I want you to see here in Jonah is what happened to him when he sinned against God, when he refused to listen to God, because we see Samson doing the same thing.

You see, you can look at Jonah and you will see over and over again that he went *DOWN*, and each time it was bad.

In Jonah chapter 1 we are told, “**But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. . . . Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.**” Jonah 1:3, 5.

And finally, we are told in Jonah 1:17, **“Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”**

In other words, Jonah wanted to go down and the Lord took him down as far as you can go, in the belly of a great fish!

And the idea is this. When you go *DOWN* you are moving away from God instead of reaching up towards Him!

And what I want to bring out here is something for the days we are living in because as we look at what is going on in our nation, we too might call it a *“sanctuary of savagery.”*

But, like Jonah, what has God called us to do?

We don't have to guess on this one. Jesus tells us, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”** Matthew 28:19-20.

We have to be careful that we don't put ourselves up in an ivory tower and look down upon the unsaved and not want to see them saved. In fact, when you see what is going on, it is easy to say, *“Lord, just smote them all!”*

But that is exactly what we are not to do. First of all, we are no better. We are saved by grace and not because we are so great or so good. We are all sinners separated from God and thus, as God had grace and mercy upon our lives, may we extend that grace and mercy to others.

If you are judgmental and angry and lash out at the unsaved, you are not manifesting the nature of Jesus!

And let me say this. If we start down that road it will take us ***DOWN, DOWN, DOWN!***
And as we are going down, we are moving away from God and our actions will manifest that! Be careful!

Now if we ended here, that would not be very uplifting and thus, I am going to share one more point or the ***CONCLUSION*** as we look at what happened with Samson after he hit rock bottom!

VERSE 16:21

As the Lord departs from Samson, he finds himself taken captive by the Philistines. And here in Judges chapter 16 we see this man of God that is now blind, bound and grinding at the millstone.

What a sad picture this paints for us in regard to sin.

You see, sin ***BLINDS, BINDS, and GRINDS*** us.

Make no mistake about it. As you allow sin to continue in your life, it will begin to blind you to the truths of God.

And as you continue down that path you will awaken one day and not even realize that you are blind, that the anointing of God is gone in your life. And you will become aware of this only when the enemy has overtaken you.

We saw that in Samson's life as he continued in his downward spiral into sin not even aware that the Lord had departed from him until it was too late, and the enemy had defeated him.

There are many Christians today who are blinded to the truths of God and are walking around, being guided by the world. And because they are using the world as their *Seeing Eye Dog*, to lead them where they should go, we see them involved in all kinds of activities that are contrary to the word of God.

We see that sin binds us by its power and places us in bondage.

Sin has the power to bind us and make us ineffective in our walk. Samson had bronze fetters applied to his hands and feet. The enemy made him immobile. But God says that He has broken those chains that bind us and has set us free through Jesus Christ. We should no longer be slaves to sin and carry that heavy weight around with us.

And we also see that sin grinds at our lives and makes us miserable.

What a miserable place to be in - to have sin just grinding at your life. Samson knew exactly what it felt like for he was the one at the millstone grinding the wheat, a job that was usually done by a mule or donkey. And it must have just eaten him up on the inside. This was a constant reminder of his failure before God and his people.

Samson was a broken man at this point in his life. He had great potential to be used by God to deliver Israel from the Philistines but because he let his flesh control his life, he was now a captive; **BLIND**, in **BONDAGE** and **GRINDING** at the millstone.

But keep in mind that God did not bring him to this place to leave him there.

Samson had hit rock bottom and as he walked around and around grinding the wheat, he returned to the Lord. Now, instead of going **DOWN**, he was looking **UP!** And that is exactly where he needed to be.

And, as we will see when we get to Judges chapter 16, the Philistines called for Samson to perform some great feat of strength, and when he was brought into the temple of their god, he placed his hands on the pillars and pushed them down and three thousand men and women were killed that day by Samson, and Samson lost his life as well.

Yes, Samson returned, but the tragedy here is what we are told in Judges 16:30, “**...So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.**”

May we stay on the right track and not be taken off course by others.

May we have our feet placed upon solid ground, upon Jesus Christ and not begin drifting away from the truths of God found in the Word of God.

And the warning, if we do follow this world, if we do place our feet on unstable ground, we will be going ***DOWN, DOWN, DOWN!***

And as I close, let me leave you with two Scriptures.

First, in Psalm 101:3-4, where we are told, “**I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness.**”

Stand strong in the Lord, obey His Word, don't compromise your faith and walk in the high calling by which you have been called.

And, start your day as the Psalmist reminds us in Psalm 5:3, “**My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; In the morning I will direct it to You, And I will look up.**”

May we ***LOOK UP*** and keep our eyes focused upon Jesus and walk as He leads us!