

JUDGES 15:9-20
SAMSON, AN ENIGMA!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 15, as we continue our in-depth study through the book of Judges.

Over the last several weeks we have been looking at the last Judge in the book of Judges, Samson.

And, as we have seen, he was a man with great potential to be used mightily by God, but, because of his weakness, because he allowed his flesh to control his life, he fell far short of what God had for him!

Let me give you some background information that will help us understand what is taking place here in our study this morning in Judges chapter 15.

We have seen that Samson lusted after a Philistine woman down in Timnah, in Philistine country. Keep in mind that the Philistines had the children of Israel in bondage for forty years. Can you imagine. And he is friends with this enemy? Not good!

In fact, that is how the story of Samson opens up in Judges 13:1, showing what Israel did, turning from the Lord and the consequences of that. We are told, “**Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.**”

Now, knowing that, how in the world could Samson even go down into the Philistine land and not only go down there, but lust, not love, after a Philistine woman? It makes no sense, and that truly is Samson. As you look at his life, the things that he does, it just does not make sense.

Well, maybe it does. I think if we were honest with ourselves, we all struggle with the flesh. And the Bible even tells us this, **“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”** Galatians 5:17.

So there is this battle that is going on in our lives, as it was in Samson’s, and the thing that will be manifested in your life, the flesh or the Spirit, is all based upon what you feed the most.

If you feed the flesh, go after things that God has warned you about, then the flesh is what will be manifested in your life. And Paul goes on to tell us in Galatians chapter 5 what the works of the flesh look like, and they are not pretty, nor are they intended to be pretty. They are just the facts of what your life will look like if you feed the flesh.

Paul put it like this, **“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”** Galatians 5:19-21.

On the other end of the spectrum is the Spirit and if you are in the Word of God, if you are listening and obeying God, if you have surrendered your life to Him and walk in the Spirit, then it is the fruit of the Spirit that will be manifested in your life.

And please understand that the fruit of the Spirit is ***LOVE, AGAPE LOVE***, unconditional love, and it out of that love we see it manifested in many different ways as Paul tells us in Galatians chapter 5.

Paul put it like this, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”** Galatians 5:22-26.

For Samson, he fed his flesh and that is what was manifested in his life as he lusted for this Philistine woman in Timnah.

He even refused to listen to his parents who tried to persuade Samson to marry a daughter of the children of Israel, but his response to them was this, **“... Get her, [this Philistine woman] for me, for she pleases me well.”** Judges 14:3

And it is one compromise after another for Samson because once you start feeding the flesh, it is never satisfied and it wants more and more and it truly ends up being all about yourself and not what God desires, and that is what we see with Samson.

As he goes down to Timnah he is in a vineyard and as a Nazarite, he was not to eat grapes or drink wine. So he should not have been in Timnah, Philistine country and he should not have been in a vineyard!

He also killed a lion and then, some time latter, as he was returning for his wedding to this Philistine woman down in Timnah, he sees the carcass of this dead lion and in it is a bee nest with honey. So he reaches in and takes some honey and he even brought some to his parents, not telling them where he got this honey from.

You see, Samson, in being a Nazarite, was not to touch a dead animal, and yet, here we see that he had no problem doing it but he must have realized it was wrong and that is why he did not tell his parents.

Now to the seven-day wedding feast, and keep in mind that there was a lot of drinking going on there.

And Samson did not have any friends to join him. No one from the children of Israel were friends with Samson and I think it was the behavior of Samson that kept himself from others!

So the Philistines provide thirty companions, thirty men to join in this drinking celebration, and again, Samson was not to drink wine, but again, he compromised his faith and did what he wanted.

At this feast he puts forth this riddle to these thirty Philistine men. **“Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet.”** Judges 14:14.

If they could guess the riddle, then Samson would give them thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. But there is no way that they could get this riddle and Samson knew that.

So these men confront the bride of Samson and she cries to Samson to tell her and he finally gives to her the answer to this riddle.

Well, on the seventh day of this feast Samson asked these men what the riddle means, and they told him, **“What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?”** Judges 14:18.

They got it and Samson immediately knew that his wife told them the answer to this riddle and he said to them, **“If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have solved my riddle!”** Judges 14:18.

Keep in mind that this is the wedding feast for Samson and his bride, and it doesn't look like things are working out too well.

So Samson, because he had to pay the bet that he lost, went down to the Philistine city of Ashkelon and killed thirty Philistine men and brought their clothes to these men!

And then, not even consummating the marriage, Samson goes back to his father's house and because of that, the father of this woman decided that Samson was not coming back and gave his daughter to the best man.

Well, some time passes by and Samson returns to Timnah to be with his wife and to his surprise, I am not sure why he was surprised by this, he finds out that she has been given to his best man. And the father offers his younger daughter to Samson.

He refuses the offer and he is mad. He goes and gathers three hundred jackals, ties their tails together and puts a lit torch between them and sends them into the grain fields of the Philistines, destroying their crops.

And when the Philistines found out who did this, they were angry. And they went and they burned the house down of Samsons wife and his father-in-law, killing both of them!

That is the flesh folks. It brings all kinds of ugliness and that is what Samson brought forth from his life, death and destruction.

And listen to what took place. We are told, "**And Samson said to them, [the Philistines] 'Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease.'**" Judges 15:7.

Yes, God wanted to bring judgment upon the Philistines to deliver His people, but Samson was not doing this for God, he was doing this for himself and because of that, he fell far short of all that God wanted to do.

That is where we will pick up our study this morning, as Samson is on the run from the Philistines, and he can't go back home, and he had no friends to run to. A very sad situation for a man who had so much potential!

I have called this study – ***SAMSON, AN ENIGMA!***

And that is so true, you look at his life and you are puzzled by it. And I think this is important for us to understand because we too can go down that path where the flesh is controlling our lives or we can walk in the Spirit and see the fruit of the Spirit manifested in our lives.

I have broken these verses we will be looking at this morning down into these main points.

FEAR – JUDGES 15:9-11a

EYE FOR AN EYE – JUDGES 15b

APPEASING THE ENEMY – JUDGES 15:12-13

THE EMPOWERING OF GOD – JUDGES 15:14-17

THE WAXING AND WANING FAITH OF SAMSON – JUDGES 15:18-20

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 15, beginning in verse 9 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we study through His Word.

JUDGES 15**VERSES 9-11a**

I think the Philistines had a general idea where Samson was at, but not the specific location. So they are gathering their forces and they are going to attack Judah and if he is not there, then someone will give Samson up, at least that was their thinking.

Keep in mind that Lehi was in the territory of Judah and thus, this is the first city they are coming after and it seems like a good choice to make for the Philistines.

And make no mistake about it, the Philistines are angry with Samson, they want him, and they want him now. This is the guy who has been causing all the trouble for them and they just want to get rid of him.

Now the people of Judah were not sure why the Philistines were coming against them, they did nothing to cause any trouble. Keep in mind that they have been in bondage to the Philistines for years and thus, they lost the fight, they don't want to cause any trouble.

So they ask the Philistines, “**... ‘Why have you come up against us?’...**”

And the Philistines tell the men of Judah, “**... ‘We have come to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us.’**”

In other words, with all the death and destruction that Samson brought to the Philistines, they were going to do the same to him. They were not going to let him live!

I have called these verses – ***FEAR!***

And, as you can see, ***FEAR*** has filled the hearts of the people of Judah. There is no way that they were going to be able to win in a battle against the Philistines.

And now, the Philistines want Samson, an Israelite, and were they really going to turn over their brother to the enemy?

Fear can cause us to do many foolish things and that is what we see here with the men of Judah.

They know exactly where Samson is and they go to him and they tell Samson, “**... ‘Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What is this you have done to us?’ ...**”

Isn't that interesting. Who is ruling over the children of Judah? Not God, but the Philistines or so they thought.

Fear and sin had brought them into this situation and, instead of repenting and getting right with God, they let fear drive them to do something that they should not do. Instead of letting go of their sin and returning to God, they are surrendering to the enemy!

Let me share this with you and you will see what fear can do and truly, what faith can do. One paralyzes us and the other encourages us to move forward.

We are told,

Several generations ago, during one of the most turbulent of the desert wars in the Middle East, a spy was captured and sentenced to death by a general of the Persian army.

The general, a man of intelligence and compassion, had adopted a strange and unusual custom in such cases. He permitted the condemned person to make a choice. The prisoner could either face a firing squad or pass through the Black Door.

As the moment of the execution drew near, the general ordered the spy to be brought before him for a short, final interview, the primary purpose of which was to receive the answer of the doomed man to the query: “What shall it be - the firing squad or the Black Door?”

This was not an easy decision, and the prisoner hesitated, but soon made it known that he much preferred the firing squad to the unknown horrors that might await him behind the ominous and mysterious door.

Not long thereafter, a volley of shots in the courtyard announced that the grim sentence had been fulfilled.

The general, staring at his boots, turned to his aide and said, "You see how it is with men; they will always prefer the known to the unknown. It is characteristic of people to be afraid of the undefined. Yet I gave him his choice."

"What lies beyond the Black Door?" asked the aide.

"Freedom," replied the general, "and I've known only a few brave enough to take it."

- A Treasury of Bible Illustrations

That is what I see here with these men of Judah.

The known were the Philistines and as long as they played by their rules, they would be okay.

The unknown was God. Not because He did not tell them that He would be with them and give them these victories, they just did not believe. And, like I have said, they had turned from God and now, they had no one to help them except the enemy!

Are we going to walk by faith or by sight? That is an important question because the enemy will come against us and yet, we have the promises of God.

But we also have a choice to make. Are we going to trust God or are we going to put our trust in man, in this world, in the enemy you might say?

We need to understand that God never said that it was going to be easy, but He did say that He would be with us and He would give us the victory in the battles that we face.

Then what is the problem?

The problem is we don't know how He is going to do it and we don't always like what the outcome will be.

Now are the men of Judah really going to give Samson up?

As we will see as we read on, they were willing to give Samson up, turn him over to the enemy, the Philistines, because, like they told Samson, **“Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us?”**

Because of the oppression that the Philistines brought upon the children of Israel, the fear they had on them, they were so afraid of the Philistines that they would rather turn in one of their own than face the consequences of not obeying the Philistines.

In other words, they were willing to place their support upon the Philistines instead of the one who was to deliver them, Samson! Keep in mind that Samson was a Judge, but, because he was a loner, maybe nobody knew it!

And here's the thing. Isn't it easy to lose sight of what God is doing because of the difficult situation we are in? Of course it is.

And as we look at the situation, as we see that there is no way out, are we willing to compromise what we believe and trust the enemy instead of God? I hope not.

For these men of Judah, we don't see them praying or seeking God. They only succumbed to the enemy.

Folk's, John reminds us in I John 4:4, **“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”**

May we not forget that as we walk by faith, keeping our eyes upon the Lord!

Remember what Paul said about faith in Hebrews 11:1-3, **“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”**

Faith is not some kind of force that we can control to get what we want. Faith is only possible because of who are faith is placed upon, and that is Jesus!

Paul tells us that faith is the **“substance”** or the supporting structure, like a foundation.

And the idea here is that our faith is what undergirds our hope in the things God has promised us.

Biblical faith is not a blind leap into darkness. It is a reasonable faith that is built upon many infallible proofs that will stand up as evidence in any court of law.

Let me share this with you and you will see the difference of what faith looks like and what unbelief looks like.

We are told,

Television interviewer and journalist Larry King describes three farmers who gather daily in a field during a horrible drought.

The men are down on their knees, looking upward, and praying the skies will open and pour forth a much-needed rain.

Unfortunately, the heavens are silent, and the petitioners become discouraged, but they continue to meet every morning to lift up their request to God.

One morning an uninvited stranger approaches and asks the men what they are doing. They respond, “We’re praying for rain.”

The newcomer looks at each of them and shakes his head, “No, I don’t think so.”

The first farmer says, “Of course we’re praying. We are down on our knees pleading for rain. Look around; see the drought. We haven’t had rain in more than a year!”

The outsider continues to nod his head and advises them their efforts will never work.

The second farmer jumps in and says, “We need the rain; we aren’t asking only for ourselves, but for our families and livestock.”

The man listens, nods, and says he still isn’t impressed. “You’re wasting your time,” he says.

The third farmer can’t take any more, and in anger he says, “Okay, what would you do if you were in our shoes?”

The visitor asks, “You really want to know?”

The three landowners answer, “We really want to know! The future of our farmlands is at stake.”

The guest announces, “I would have brought an umbrella!”

- More Perfect Illustrations for Every Topic and Occasion

How true that is! Do you really believe that God is able to answer your prayer because if you do, then you would walk accordingly!

FEAR caused them to go to Samson and they will eventually turn Samson over to the Philistines.

Now, let’s not forget about Samson. How is he going to respond to this situation?

We don’t have to guess for as we read on we will see that Samson is not interested in the Lord and what God desires, but for him, and it is our next point, an – **EYE FOR AN EYE!**

VERSE 11b

Now you know why I have called this an – *EYE FOR AN EYE!*

The reason that Samson did what he did to the Philistines is in retribution to what they did to him, killing his wife and father-in-law. Samson was pouring out his vengeance upon the Philistines and not for the right reason.

There is no mention of God here, just what Samson did to get back at the Philistines.

It is as this story goes about a newspaper columnist George Crane. He told this very tragic story of a wife who came into his office wanting to divorce her husband. She said, “I do not only want to get rid of him, I want to get even. Before I divorce him, I want to hurt him as much as he has me.”

And, I hate to say it, but if we are honest with ourselves, we have those feelings of not only getting back at someone who has done us wrong, but to get even and many times, to make them hurt even more!

First of all, is an eye for an eye Biblical? Yes, it is, but not as you might think. This is related to the court room and if you stole something or injured someone, you would be accountable to what you did and not more and not less.

And, the command there in Exodus chapter 21 and again in Leviticus chapter 24 is related to civil justice and not personal revenge. And what God was instructing them in the Old Testament was to prevent someone from being punished more than they should for the crime they committed!

That is not the case for us, it is a wrong that was done to us and we think we have every right to pay that person back.

We really don't.

Listen to what Paul wrote on this subject in Romans 12:17-21, **“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”**

Notice how this starts out. We are *NOT* to repay evil for evil. That is what the natural man does, but not the spiritual man.

And then Paul talks about living at peace with others, not confrontation. What Paul is saying is that on our part, we are to live at peace. Now, if they refuse or reject our offer of peace, then there is nothing we can do about it, but at least we have tried, and that door is still open if they choose to change.

We should not be responsible for the lack of peace, we should be peacemakers but that is not always possible, not because of us, but because of others refusing it.

That great scientist, George Washington Carver once said, ***“I will never let another man ruin my life by making me hate him.”***

That is good advice. We need to try to live at peace with people, to do all that we can to be peacemakers!

Now, like it or not, we are told that vengeance belongs to the Lord and not us. He will take care of those situations and I don't think we should be praying for the wrath of God to come upon those who have wronged us, but God's mercy and grace that they would turn to Him and if they do know Him that they would repent and get right with Him.

And think about it. Don't we want God's grace and mercy extended to us? Absolutely and may we pray for it in the lives of others, especially those who hate us!

And again, this is not natural, to have that kind of love for people, it is a supernatural love that only can come from God as we surrender to him.

And thus, Paul is telling us to care for our enemies and in doing so it would be like heaping coals of fire on their heads.

Now some think that having them heap of coals on their head was a sign of repentance, it may be, but I don't think so.

Yes, there was an ancient Egyptian custom that when a person wanted to demonstrate a public repentance, he would carry a pan of burning coals on his head. Thus, by our doing good, it may cause them to see their evil and repent.

In other words, love them to death! Again, that is possible, but it does not flow in what Paul has been speaking about.

You see, the focus is not on them but on us. How we care for them.

So what does Paul mean here when he says this?

Keep in mind that in Paul's day when your fire went out it was not easy to restart it.

Thus, I think the point that Paul is making is that you bring to them coals of fire to rekindle their stove or whatever. You are blessing them and that does flow with what Paul has been saying. Give them those coals of fire, let them place it on their head so they could take it home and cook or whatever.

And notice how Paul concludes this, "**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**" Romans 12:21.

How true this is. We can allow evil to overcome us if we stew in a situation, if we refuse to let it go, if we refuse to do good.

Darby said, ***“If my bad temper puts you in a bad temper, you have been overcome of evil.”***

Look at what has been going on for the last several months in our country and there are a lot of angry people out there. But, as Christians should we let that cause us to be angry and mad and even some lashing out at others?

Not at all. Our joy is in the Lord not the situations that we are facing. If we become angry and mad, are we not letting others dictate our attitude instead of the Lord filling us with His joy!

I know, we can justify our anger but who are we mad at?

“I am so mad at the Democratic party and how they are destroying our country!”

“I am so mad at Antifa and BLM and how they are causing death and destruction in our country!”

“I am so mad at the LGBTQ and how they are destroying the lives of the people in our nation, especially our children!”

“I am so mad at the news media and how liberal they are and that they don’t report the news, they report what they want, even if it is not true!”

And I can go on. Is this the problem?

No, it really isn’t.

They are the symptoms of the problem and the problem is that they have turned from God and God has given them over to these depraved things.

Thus, as they are our enemy, you might say, can we pray for them, love them, reach out to them with the love of Christ so that they may come to saving faith in Jesus? Can we heap coals of fire upon their heads and bless them even though they don't deserve it?

I hope so. God has done that with us, and we don't deserve it, never deserved it and now, can we reach out in the love of Christ to our enemies, not condoning their sin, but loving the person? We need to!

You see, God will judge the wicked one day or as Paul wrote, **“Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.**

A great example of this kind of love is given to us by Abraham Lincoln. He shows us what needs to be done with evil.

You see, Massachusetts's congressman, Thaddeus Stevens, wanted to completely crush the south after the Civil War.

But Abraham Lincoln wanted to make peace, to heal the wounds and forgive.

But Thaddeus Stevens slammed his fist down on the table and said, ***“Mr. Lincoln, I think enemies ought to be destroyed!”***

Abraham Lincoln very quietly responded and said, ***“Mr. Stevens, don't I destroy my enemy when I have made him my friend?”***

You see, destroy the enemy with the love of God, point them to Jesus and make them your friend, a child of God.

May we learn from Lincoln's example!

As we continue on here in Judges chapter 15, we will see our next point and how the men of Judah were – ***APPEASING THE ENEMY!***

VERSES 12-13

What we see here is that these 3,000 men of Judah take Samson and tie him up and the one stipulation that Samson has is that these men of Judah would not kill him.

How could Samson be so brave, so strong? Some speculate that it was his faith in God, that he was willing to put himself in this difficult situation knowing that God would take care of him.

One writer put it like this, *“It seems that Samson submitted to this. Assuming this was true; it showed great faith on Samson’s part. He was willing to put himself in a difficult position and to trust God to take care of him.”* (David Guzik)

Now I have to admit, that does sound great, but I don’t see that with Samson. I see a man who thought he could do anything, and yes, maybe with the help of the Lord but he truly is not looking to God, but I believe he is looking to himself to deliver him from the mess and maybe God is along for the ride!

We will see in our next point and the victory that Samson had, what Samson thought about it. He said, **“... I have slain a thousand men!”**

Really, with the jawbone of a donkey **YOU** did that!

And we will deal with that a little more when we do get to our next point, but again, I don’t think Samson saw God as the main factor in what he did, I think Samson felt like he could do anything!

I want to take a minute and deal with this idea of – **APPEASING THE ENEMY!**

We have seen Israel try to do that with the Palestinians and every time that Israel gives them a piece of land to occupy, they use it as a base of operations to attack Israel from. In other words, you will never appease the enemy, they will want more and more and more until they have all your land!

Another one we see today is that the church is trying to appease the enemy and to do that, the church ends up compromising what they believe, giving more and more of the truths of God found in the Word of God away and allowing more and more false doctrine to come into the church just so the enemy of God will be appeased.

And guess what? They never are and they want more and more, and we see that the last days church, the church of Laodicea in the book of Revelation, has Jesus outside the church knocking to get in!

And we see this even in our own lives, giving into the enemy and it is never enough. Let me share this with you. We are told,

The location: Pearl Harbor The date: Sunday morning, December 7, 1941. Three hundred and fifty-three Japanese airplanes began swarming all around the harbor. Within a couple of hours, America lost eight battleships, six major airfields, almost all planes and 2,400 men. What began at 7:50 a.m. was supposedly a surprised attack. But these are the startling facts:

That morning, 50 minutes earlier, at 7 a.m., while the Japanese warplanes were 137 miles (50 minutes) away, two US soldiers on a small radar station in the Pacific scanned the screen and saw dots appearing, until the whole screen was filled. These soldiers notified their youthful supervisor, a lieutenant. No other officer was around, that being a Sunday.

The lieutenant thought these must be planes from California, and without another thought, said these crucial words: “Don’t worry about it.” There would have been time to scramble the planes at Pearl Harbor, prepare the battleships and shelter the men, but this lieutenant, at the most responsible moment of his career, failed the nation with the words, “Don’t worry about it.”

In our own lives, is there something that could wreak havoc--spiritual destruction in your life--and yet you dismiss it away, thinking, “Oh, don’t worry about it! It’s just a ‘little’ sin”? It is nothing big.” That is what we call spiritual compromise. Pearl Harbor may have been prevented if someone took the warning seriously. But because they didn’t, they said, “Don’t worry about it,” and numerous lives were lost. . . .

Sin begins in the mind, develops in the heart and comes to fruition in the body. All sin can be traced back to an initial moment of compromise.

What if the world decided to compromise one percent. That’s all? Here’s what would occur:

Verizon would have no cell service for 14 minutes each day. One point seven million pieces of first-class mail lost each day. Thirty-five thousand newborn babies dropped by doctors or nurses each year. Two hundred thousand people getting the wrong drug prescriptions each year. Unsafe drinking water three days a year. Three misspelled words on the average page of type. Two million people would die from food poisoning each year. In fact, there are:

Five slippery steps to compromise

- 1. A failure to purpose in our hearts ahead of time to do the right thing.**
- 2. Underestimating evil (including the failure to recognize temptation).**
- 3. Rationalizing.**

4. A failure to consider the costly consequences.**5. A sudden, deliberate choice to give in to sin.**

The best example of this sort of compromise in the Bible is Lot. Lot got into an argument with Abraham over the land because they had their own sheep, cattle and farmers, and the land wasn't big enough for them both.

So Abraham was a godly man and said, "Look out onto the land, and choose where you want to dwell." And Lot looked, and Genesis says that he saw that the land was fertile and pleasing to the eye, so he set out for that land. What land was that? The plains near Sodom and Gomorrah.

So Lot went out. You would think he would have stayed as far away from Sodom and Gomorrah as possible. But his eye was appeased, and so often it is with our eyes that we see something we want; and we head toward it. We didn't actually do anything wrong yet, but we are taking a step closer to it, putting ourselves in danger and harm's way. So his tents were pitched TOWARD Sodom.

The next we read about Lot, he was IN Sodom. Not only IN sin, but at the city gate, in the most prominent place, fully engulfed in culture, politics and all that Sodom had to offer. He couldn't get out easily. His family thought he was joking when he tried to convince them to leave. That is the most saddening: Your compromise will usually affect others. . . .

Dr. Laurence M. Gould, president emeritus of Carleton College, once said this:

“I do not believe the greatest threat to our future is from bombs or guided missiles. I don’t think our civilization will end that way. I think it will die when we no longer care. Arnold Toynbee has pointed out that 19 of 21 civilizations have died from within and not by conquest from without. There were no bands playing and flags waving when these civilizations decayed. It happened slowly, in the quiet and in the dark when no one was aware.”

- <https://bit.ly/2EyMdhQ>

I hope I have clearly shown you that you will never, never appease the enemy be it sin, or whatever we are giving into. It will always want more and more, and you will compromise what you believe to appease this enemy or try to appease this enemy. Be careful and be warned!

VERSES 14-17

As the Philistines see these 3,000 men of Judah bringing Samson to them all bound by ropes, they start rejoicing because their enemy has been captured.

But not so fast because the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Samson, the ropes come off and he picks up a fresh donkey jawbone!

Come on; is that the best we can do here? I mean a fresh donkey jawbone; it still could have some flesh on it!

But God empowered Samson with that jawbone, and he killed 1,000 Philistines with it.

This was a pretty sweet victory for Samson with this weapon that was very unusual.

And please, and I am repeating myself here, this was not done through the might of Samson, but by – ***THE EMPOWERING OF GOD!***

And yet, in this little poem you might say, Samson has the audacity to say, “**I have slain a thousand men!**”

Now we read this, and we might be thinking, “*How in the world could Samson say something foolish like that? It would be impossible to kill that many soldiers with a jawbone of a donkey. And even one, you would have to work at it and hit the person in the right spot. So how could he say something like that?*”

Because we all could say that, and we all do say that at times in our lives.

Let me give you this illustration and I am not saying that doing a resume is wrong, but think about what we put on them!

We boast about all that **WE** have done!

I am impressed with athletes who give praise to God when they are being interviewed for the accomplishments that they have made in their sports.

We can do all things in Christ but apart from Him, there is nothing that we can accomplish that He will accept, and our accomplishment will be far less when we do it on our own!

For Samson, yes, God did give him the victory. But I wonder how many more Philistines would have been destroyed if Samson walked with God. I wonder how many more Philistines would have been destroyed if Samson did not do this on his own, but like the other Judges, worked with the children of Israel!

Yes, this was a great victory and as Samson finished his work here, he calls the name of the place Ramath Lehi or literally, “***Jawbone Hill.***”

I guess it is a fitting name!

Now think about this for a minute. Samson is taking credit for this victory. Do you think God is going to allow him to remain with that mindset?

Absolutely not. God loves Samson too much to leave him in that sinful condition, that prideful condition.

And that will bring us to our last point – ***THE WAXING AND WANING FAITH OF SAMSON!***

VERSES 18-20

What we see here is that after Samson killed these 1,000 Philistines, he is thirsty.

And that just makes sense. It was probably hot, and it probably took some time and he worked up a thirst, so much so that he thinks he is going to die if he doesn't get any water!

So he cries out to God for help and as many read this they feel that the response here by Samson is good, that he is relying on God for water but listen to his words.

Remember what Samson said in Judges 15:16 after this great victory, when things were going well, "**I have slain a thousand men.**"

Again, that is pretty prideful on the part of Samson. He got this victory; he has done all this and there is no mention of God.

Well, let me clarify that. There is no mention of God until Samson is in trouble. That is why I have called these verses – ***THE WAXING AND WANING FAITH OF SAMSON!***

Now he is in trouble. Now he is dying of thirst and he says, "**You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?**" Judges 15:18.

Now he is acknowledging that God has given him this victory and he is basically saying to God, *“Thanks for the victory God, what are you going to do now, let me die of thirst?”*

That is not really a heart of thanksgiving towards God, but it is a slap in the face to God! And I see Samson moving farther and farther away from God.

And God is trying to draw Samson back and that is why Samson did not find any water, because God wanted his attention!

Matthew Poole comments on Samson’s great thirst. He said that it was *“partly sent by God, that by the experience of his own impotency he might be forced to ascribe the victory to God only, and not to himself.”*

And we see that God is gracious and merciful and He does provide water for Samson. We are told, **“So God split the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day.”** Judges 15:19.

Like I have said, I think God is trying to draw Samson back to Him with His love but Samson was not listening and he is going to have to hit rock bottom before he will look up again and seek the Lord and allow the Lord to be in control of his life!

Samson’s flesh, his bodily appetites became the thing that controlled his life, as we will continue to see in Judges chapter 16.

Of this man Samson, Spurgeon wrote, *“With that simple minded faith which was so characteristic of Samson, who was nothing but a big child, he turned his eye to his heavenly Father, and cried, ‘O Jehovah, thou hast given me this great deliverance, and now shall I die for thirst? After all that thou hast done for me, shall the uncircumcised rejoice over me because I die for want of a drink of water?’ Such confidence had he, that God would interpose on his behalf.”*

How true that is. He was a spiritual child and he did not grow up until the end of his life when he had nothing to do but look up to God and not to his flesh!

God wants our faith to grow, to be strong. We need to learn to trust in him and let me say this. Our faith grows as it is exercised. That means trials, difficulties in our lives God will use to increase our faith in Him and less in ourselves.

George Mueller makes that very point as he wrote, *“God delights to increase the faith of His children. We ought, instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, to be willing to take them from God’s hand as a means. I say - and say it deliberately - trials, obstacles, difficulties, and sometimes defeats, are the very food of faith. . . . We should take them out of His hands as evidences of His love and care for us in developing more and more that faith which He is seeking to strengthen in us.”*

Now, as this chapter closes, we see that Samson judged Israel for twenty years, but the story is not over yet. We will see what happens to Samson and how the Lord draws the faith out of this man before he dies!

But before that happens, we will see in Judges chapter 16 how unpredictable and undependable Samson was because he was a double-minded man. That is, Samson was strong before men, but weak before women.

He fought the battles of God by day but succumbed to his flesh by night.

And being a double-minded man, we will see that he is very unstable in his actions.

But again, God is letting Samson run until he can run no further, and he will have to turn to the Lord.

As we will see, Samson let the lusts of his eyes, the lust of his flesh and the pride of life be his downfall and he did not know it until it was too late!

I don't know where you are at this morning, but my prayer is that you would trust less in yourself and more in the Lord. Keep your faith strong in Him and see the salvation He will bring to the situations that you face.

God is working and He loves us too much to leave us where we are at. He will continue working and chipping away at those areas of stone that need to be removed until one day, we will be called home and we will go to be with Him!

And I will leave you with these encouraging words from Paul in I Thessalonians 5:23-24, where he wrote, "**Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.**"