

JUDGES 16:1-3
SAMSON TEMPTS HIMSELF!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 16 as we continue our in-depth study in the book of Judges.

As we have seen, this is a very interesting book when you think about it because it fits in with what is going on in our nation today.

You see, as the children of Israel turned from the Lord, they found themselves in bondage to various enemies that were around them.

Look at our nation. We have turned from the Lord and now we are reaping what we have sown. We see lawlessness, we see all kinds of evil, we see murder, we see the killing of unborn children like it is nothing, we see rape, we see drug abuse, we see the rise of homosexuality and lesbianism, we even see the coming acceptance of pedophiles in our nation! And the list can go on.

Now you may be thinking, ***“Pastor Joe, we are not in bondage to any nation, so what are you talking about?”***

I am talking about the bondage we are in because of our sin. If you don't think this is bondage, you need to take a closer look.

And, like with the children of Israel, the only solution is to repent and get right with God and it truly does begin with believers. We need to be in prayer for this nation, for the people, for our leaders that they would turn from their wicked ways and God may heal our land!

These things that are being placed before us are nothing more than temptations and they are tempting us to move away from God and become more like the world. Yes, we, as Christians, need to be careful, we need to be aware of what is going on, because we too can fall prey to these things!

You see, the world wants to conform us into its image, and you can see what that looks like and it is not good.

But God wants to transform your life and that is done as you renew your mind by being in the Word of God, the Bible and by surrendering your life, not to the flesh, but to the Holy Spirit to guide you in the things you should and shouldn't do according to the Word of God!

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

And Samson had all the potential to do great things for God, but he let his flesh control his life and in the end, he will find out that God had departed from him, even though he did not recognize it at first because he had moved so far away from God!

I have called our study here in Judges chapter 16 – *SAMSON TEMPTS HIMSELF!* And we will see how that plays out, but, like I have said, temptation is a big thing today, and I guess it has always been a big thing.

But, in the days we are living in, as in the days of Noah it seems to be and like the Bible tells us, wickedness abounds and that wickedness is what Satan and the world are placing before us to tempt us and to get us to take a bite of it!

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean about temptation. We are told, I think we would be shocked if we could count the number of times we are tempted each day.

Our culture has become so sexualized over the past few decades that it's easy to become hardened by the number of images and temptations that bombard us each day.

Walk through a supermarket and you see suggestive photos on the covers of magazines . . . turn on the television and it doesn't take long before you see advertisements for sexy lingerie . . . switch on the computer, and you find unwanted e-mails offering x-rated images with just one click.

I think we would be shocked if we could count the number of times we are tempted each day. Sometimes life feels like a continual stream of choices: Will I trust God for the power to turn from that temptation, or will I dwell on it just a bit? Will I take a second look? Will I click on that tempting link . . . just this one time?

I am reminded of a story that FamilyLife Co-Founder Dennis Rainey tells in his upcoming devotional, *Moments With You*:

I was seated in a car with another Christian leader - a good friend of mine. We were both away from home, without our wives, waiting for a colleague who had just gone inside a store. And as we sat there, a woman walked by who was, well, drop-dead gorgeous. I caught sight of her as she entered the store, and then turned back to our conversation.

When she walked by again, by God's grace (or the fear of my own reputation being spoiled), I summoned up enough self-control to look away. But I did notice my friend's eyes lingering as she walked on to her car. Knowing we were both fighting the same battle, I casually said, "Hey, you can look at her once, you can look at her twice, but if you look at her that long . . ."

We laughed. We knew.

Guys, there's nothing wrong with appreciating a woman's beauty. But we all know in an instant when we've reached that point where we're no longer simply noticing her but have begun enjoying her and letting our minds become a playground of lustful thoughts.

As Dennis writes, it's often not the first look that gets you - it's the second, and third, and fourth. If you dwell on that temptation, you begin playing with powerful forces.

As James 1:14-15 tells us, "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."

These words run contrary to the spirit of our modern age, which tells us that biblical boundaries for sex are prudish and outdated. Our culture encourages us to embrace and experiment with sexuality to help "discover who you are." And then it avoids taking responsibility for how uncontrolled lust can ravage lives, marriages, and families.

Whenever "FamilyLife Today" airs programs on pornography, for example, we receive a number of heart-breaking e-mails about people giving in to temptation and getting caught in a trap from which they couldn't break free. Here are just two examples:

“At the age of 13, I started my first job. That day I took my first puff of a cigarette and was exposed to pornography for the first time. I had no idea of the power that was to take control of my life as a result of that action. For the next 25 years I battled with pornography. My sin did not stop with pornography but took [other forms]. No matter how hard I tried, I could not make real changes. I could not escape it.”

“My dad had pornographic literature in the house that I found as a young girl. It distorted my view of male-female relationships. I began to see sex as a way to get love. I led an extremely active sexual lifestyle and eventually started working as an exotic dancer. I’ve been following the Lord for 11 years now, and am married to a wonderful man. But the ghost of pornography still haunts me. Fantasies still plague my mind and interfere with what should be pure love for my husband. I can see the connection now between how I feel and what you said. I am praying for God to cleanse me of the effects of pornography.”

Letters like these echo the warning of James 1:14-15 and show us that giving in to temptation is far more dangerous than many people realize. One of the most critical commitments you can make to your marriage is to stay clean. You can’t avoid temptation. But you can control your response.

Choose to turn away. And ask God for the power to continue turning away every day.

- <https://bit.ly/34SpR67>

That is what we will see this morning with Samson. He was a man who not only was tempted by the lusts of his flesh, but he put himself in situations that tempted him, and he just gave into those temptations. And, in the end, it did not turn out well, it never does even though we think we know better, we think that it will. It doesn’t!

In our study – “**SAMSON TEMPTS HIMSELF!**” we will see three main points in these verses. They are,

LUST OF THE FLESH – JUDGES 16:1

THE FLESH LEADS TO DESTRUCTION – JUDGES 16:2

NO VICTORY – JUDGES 16:3

So with that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in Judges chapter 16, beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word and we deal with this subject of ***TEMPTATION!***

JUDGES 16

VERSE 1

Now Samson is moving deep into the enemy’s camp, way down to Gaza, which was located on the south seacoast.

And if that is all you read, that Samson went down to Gaza in Philistine country, you might come to the conclusion that this man of God was going down there to defeat the enemy, but we are told the real reason and it was not a mission to conquer the enemy.

No, Samson makes his way all the way down to Gaza for the sole purpose of having sex with a prostitute!

And listen again to how matter-of-factly this is stated, “**Then Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.**”

And I don’t think I have to tell you this, but this is nothing more than the ***LUST OF THE FLESH!***

Samson went where he should not have gone, down to Philistine country and there, he sees this prostitute and engages in sex with her, like it is nothing and yet, Samson was supposed to be a man of God, and he let his flesh control his life instead of God!

And that truly is the story of Samson. Remember in Judges 14:1-3 where we are told, **“Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, ‘I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.’ Then his father and mother said to him, ‘Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?’ And Samson said to his father, ‘Get her for me, for she pleases me well.’”**

Samson went down to Timnah, away from what the Lord wanted, and he lusted after a Philistine woman. He then goes and wants his parents to arrange a marriage for him with this woman.

Now his parents tried to persuade him to find a Jewish girl, someone from the children of Israel and not a Philistine woman. But he refused and he told them, **“Get her for me, for she pleases me well.”**

And here is the problem for Samson. He did not seek direction from God. He did not pray about it. He did not listen to what God had already spoken regarding marrying pagan women in His Word. He refused to listen to his parents.

And for Samson, it was all about what pleased him! It truly was not what pleased the Lord and in pleasing the Lord, we are blessed because God has what is best for us, but Samson did not see it that way!

And, as we have seen, that did not work out well. In fact, because of his foolish actions, his wife and father-in-law were killed by the Philistines.

It is after this that he goes down again to Philistine country, to Gaza and picks up a harlot or prostitute!

Now there are some who believe that Samson went down to Gaza to kill some Philistines, but that is not what the text is saying here. But I will share with you what they say. We are told,

Gaza was an important seaport town located about forty miles from Samson's hometown of Zorah.

We aren't told why Samson went there, but it's not likely he was looking for sensual pleasure. There were plenty of prostitutes available in Israel even though the law condemned this practice (Lev. 19:29; Deut. 22:21).

It was after he arrived in Gaza that Samson saw a prostitute and decided to visit her. Once again the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh combined to grip Samson and make him a slave to his passions.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT*, p. 464

I do disagree with that because, as we will see as we read on, Samson is going to get involved with another Philistine woman, Delilah and it will be his downfall.

I think he went there because he liked the Philistine women, he knew what was there, he knew the morality of the Philistine people and he went there because of that. And make no mistake about it, he went after it so that his flesh could be satisfied! This was nothing more than lust, satisfying the flesh!

And here's the thing. This is not something that just happened, Samson tempted himself. He put himself in a situation that tempted his flesh and he gave into it! And folk's, there are plenty of temptations out there without putting ourselves into situations that will tempt us even more!

We must be wise because if we put temptations before us, we are doing so because we are willing to give into them. Maybe not initially, but the more we do, the easier it will be to give into those temptations.

When I was in nursing I worked for non-profit hospitals and for whatever reason, they would have Christmas parties for the employees and your spouse was not able to come. It was just for the employees.

And at these Christmas parties there was drinking, there was dancing, nothing wrong with that, but without your spouse, not a good combination.

So each year people would ask me if I was going to the Christmas party and my response was always the same. ***“No, I am not going. It sounds like fun, but I do not want to go to a party without my wife!”***

What was the big deal?

The big deal is this. I worked with mostly women, and now I am going to a party where there is drinking and dancing without my wife! I don't think so. Why do I want to place myself in a situation like that, allow any temptation to cause me to do something that I would regret!

Now you may be thinking, ***“I would never do that! I could go to a party without my spouse and it would not be a big deal!”***

That is great, but if you are truly honest with yourself, there have been many marriages that have been ruined because of foolish thinking like that. We are all capable of doing these things and thus, don't put yourself in situations like that. Be wise!

And think about it, as we saw in our opening story, we are being tempted all the time, and not by God, but by the Devil!

Listen to what we are told in James 1:13-17. James wrote, **“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”**

But in James 1:12 it almost seems to be saying that God tempts us. Listen to what James 1:12 says, **“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”**

As you compare that with what we just read here in James 1:13, it seems to contradict each other, like I have said. So, what is James trying to tell us here, what is his point and how do we reconcile the two?

First of all, it is important for us to understand the difference of what God is doing and what Satan is doing because there is a big difference!

Back in James 1:12 I believe James is speaking of trials or tests that God brings into our lives to test our faith, to help us to grow.

But here in James 1:13 and really James 1:14 as well, he is speaking of temptation. How do I know that is true?

Let me explain.

The words “**trials**” and “**temptations**” come from the same Greek word, PEIRASMOS, (pi-ras-mos’). Thus, when we read of situations that will strengthen us, help us to grow, mature us, they are from God and they are trials to test our faith.

On the other hand, Satan will come along to tempt us, to exploit the trial we are going through so we might sin.

God wants to build us up - and He uses trials to do that. Satan wants to destroy us – and he uses temptations to do that. It can be the same situation; it just depends on how we respond to it!

That is what Spurgeon said, “*Satan tempts: God tries. But the same trial may be both a temptation and a trial; and it may be a trial from God’s side, and a temptation from Satan’s side, just as Job suffered from Satan, and it was a temptation; but he also suffered from God through Satan, and so it was a trial to him.*”

Keep in mind, don’t lose sight of that fact that temptation does not come from God. And yes, God does allow it, but He Himself does not entice us to evil, though God may test our faith *without* a solicitation to evil (**nor does He Himself tempt anyone**).

And here in James 1:13-14 I think that these verses are very interesting because we like to blame everyone else for the predicament we are in, the troubles we find ourselves in. And what does James tell us who is to blame?

“You the man!”

It is not the Devil, it is not the world, it is our flesh! Yes, the Devil and the world can influence us, tempt us, but it is our flesh that is drawn down that path.

And that is interesting to me because when James says “**drawn away**” it comes from the Greek word EXELKO, (ex-el’-ko) and it was often used as a hunting term that spoke of a baited trap that was used as a lure to capture an unsuspecting animal.

The word “**enticed**” is the Greek word DELEAZO, (del-eh-ad’-zo) and it was used as a fishing term to refer to bait, to bait a hook!

That is Satan’s plan, to deceive us into thinking that sin is good, and **WE** take a bite.

You see, we are drawn away by our own fleshly desires and as we begin to think about sin, fantasize about it, the end result is that sin is birthed in our lives and sin will bring about death!

But, as we surrender our lives to the Lord, as we seek Him as we are going through this testing of our faith, God has only good to come out of it, growth for us, spiritually speaking. Yes, the Devil is tempting us to sin and God is testing our faith to help us to grow!

And I do realize that nobody likes to go through difficult times, times of testing in regard to our faith, but we will and make no mistake about it, Satan is right there to tempt us.

But we need that testing to grow, like I have said. Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean.

We are told,

One day a small boy saw a butterfly struggling to emerge from its cocoon. It was straining with all its might to get out of the opening which was too small.

Thinking he was helping the butterfly, the boy took his knife and slit the cocoon. But to his dismay the butterfly emerged with small and shriveled wings and was unable to fly.

Within a short time it was dead.

When the boy asked his father about it, his father explained that the butterfly needed the struggle to get out of the cocoon, for this was the process that developed its wings and made them strong enough for flight.

In trying to help by relieving the butterfly of its painful struggle, he had actually deprived it of that which was necessary for its development and its very life.

This same principle carries over into all of human life - the struggles and the trials we face actually serve for our development, not only in the physical realm but also in the moral and spiritual.

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

How true that is. I can honestly tell you that I would never have placed myself in the various situations I have faced over the years because it was not easy. But God allowed these in my life to help me to grow.

And yes, Samson placed the temptation before him, and I don't think he was interested in fighting against that temptation of the flesh. Again, be careful.

But let me share with you how we can defend ourselves against the temptations that we will face every day, and we will face them.

The key to fighting these temptations is to be in the Word of God and let the Word of God saturate your life. And not just that, but you then must obey the Word of God, you must allow the Holy Spirit to lead you in what to do and not quench the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Temptations are tempting or they would be easy to fight against. But they are not easy and yet, God has given us the power to defeat them. It is as Paul said in Galatians 5:16-18, **“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 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. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”**

Like I have said, the Holy Spirit can give us the power and the guidance to overcome these temptations in our life.

But there is something else that is very important for us and that is the Word of God. You see, it is the Holy Spirit working with the Bible, the Word of God, showing us what is right, what is wrong, how to get right when we have gone astray and how to stay right.

Listen to what David said in Psalm 119:9-11, **“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”**

What we see here is that the Psalmist is speaking of a purity of life and how we are to meditate upon God’s Word if we want to live that way.

You see, as you saturate yourself with the Word of God it will keep you clean as the Holy Spirit shows you what is right or what is wrong.

And if you decide to go down the wrong path, the Holy Spirit will convict you as He quickens the Word of God in your heart.

You see, the best defense against sin is a good, strong offense.

Or as one writer said, *“This Book will keep you from sin and sin will keep you from this Book!”*

How true that is!

What are you filling your life with? What is the passion of your life? Is it the things of this world that will tempt you down a dangerous path or the things of God that will lead you in righteousness?

You see, we should do as Paul tells us in Philippians 4:8-9, **“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”**

Let the Word of God keep you clean as you saturate yourself in God’s Word and make it part of your life. The Word of God cleanses us!

Spurgeon summed it up like this, *“Young man, the Bible must be your chart, and you must exercise great watchfulness that your way may be according to its directions. You must take heed to your daily life as well as study your Bible, and you must study your Bible that you may take heed to your daily life. With the greatest care a man will go astray if his map misleads him; but with the most accurate map he will still lose his road if he does not take heed to it.”*

If you want to keep pure, clean, if you want to be victorious over temptations, then take heed to follow God’s Word!

Remember when the Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan for forty days. How did Jesus defeat those temptations of Satan that were nothing more than the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life?

He defeated those temptations by saying – ***IT IS WRITTEN!***

The danger comes as we don't adhere to God's Word and we go by feelings, or by what this person has said or what this book has said.

If that is what you do, you are going to fail, and it is going to be bad.

The key, and it is a big one, don't put yourself in situations that will tempt you to sin, that will bring about a lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

Warren Wiersbe wrote,

We can't help it when Satan and his demons tempt us, but when we tempt ourselves, we become our own enemy.

God doesn't tempt us (James 1:12-15).

When we pray, "lead us not into temptation" (Matt. 6:13), we're asking that we not tempt ourselves *or put ourselves into such a position that we tempt God.*

We tempt Him either by forcing Him to intervene and rescue us or by daring Him to stop us.

It's possible for people's character to deteriorate so much that they don't have to be tempted in order to sin. All they need is the opportunity to sin, and they'll tempt themselves.

Illicit sexual experience may begin as sweet as honey, but it ends up as bitter as wormwood (Prov. 5:1-14). Samson the man had become Samson the animal as the prostitute led him to the slaughter (Prov. 7:6-23).

You see, if you place yourself in situations that will tempt you, well, that will bring us to our next point – ***THE FLESH LEADS TO DESTRUCTION!***

VERSE 2

Obviously the Philistines did not like Samson. Not only was he a Jew, but he has caused them all kinds of trouble and they just want to do away with him.

So when the men of the city found out that Samson was in Gaza, they laid in wait for him.

They locked the gates of the city and they were going to wait until morning and then they would capture and kill Samson. And really, at night the city gates would be locked for protection, and they knew that and now they wait to get him when he tries to leave in the morning. They had him, or so they thought.

Now for Samson, by this time he had satisfied his flesh and it was getting late, so Samson was ready to move on.

And Samson was aware of what was going on and as we will see as we finish up our study, he has a plan to get out of town.

Now, like I have said, what I would like to focus on here is that ***THE FLESH LEADS TO DESTRUCTION*** and we see that as the Philistines want to kill Samson!

Let me share this poem with you, it is powerful, and it truly speaks forth what we are talking about here, the death and destruction that comes as we give into temptation and we sin.

The poem goes like this,

I destroy homes, tear families apart, take your children, and that's just the start. I'm more costly than diamonds, more costly than gold, the sorrow I bring is a sight to behold. Just try me once and I might let you go, but try me twice, and I'll own your soul.

When I possess you, you'll steal and you'll lie. You do what you have to just to get high.

You'll lie to your mother; you'll steal from your dad. When you see their tears, you should feel sad. But you'll forget your morals and how you were raised, I'll be your conscience, I'll teach you my ways.

I take kids from parents, and parents from kids, I turn people from God, and separate from friends. I'll take everything from you, your looks and your pride, I'll be with you always, right by your side. I'll take and take, until you have nothing more to give. When I'm finished with you, you'll be lucky to live.

If you try me be warned this is no game. If given the chance, I'll drive you insane. I'll ravish your body; I'll control your mind. I'll own you completely; your soul will be mine.

The nightmares I'll give you while lying in bed, the voices you'll hear from inside your head, the sweats, the shakes, the visions you'll see; I want you to know, these are all gifts from me.

But then it's too late, and you'll know in your heart, that you are mine, and we shall not part. You'll regret that you tried me, they always do, but you came to me, not I to you.

You knew this would happen. Many times you were told, but you challenged my power, and chose to be bold. You could have said no, and just walked away. If you could live that day over now what would you say?

I'll be your master; you will be my slave, I'll even go with you, when you go to your grave. Now that you have met me, what will you do? Will you try me or not? It's all up to you. I can bring you more misery than words can tell. Come take my hand, let me lead you to Hell.

- <https://bit.ly/3bf4ZXM>

Wow, that is powerful!

And yes, for Christians, we are saved by grace, but make no mistake about it, like Samson, our life will become a mess if we play with sin, if we allow temptations to control our lives.

Let me share with you just a few Scriptures to show you that death and destruction are just a part of giving into temptation.

In I Timothy 6:9-10 we are told, **“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”**

Money itself is not good or evil, but the lust for it is evil. Why is that?

Because it will cause us to do all kinds of evil things to obtain it. It becomes a snare, or a trap to catch us and in the end, it is difficult to let go. You just want a little bit more and then a little bit more and you have done all kinds of evil, things that you would never imagine, to obtain it. Be careful and don't fall prey to that kind of temptation and for that matter, anything that has that kind of hold on our lives will tempt us to do something to maintain it or get more of it!

In Proverbs 14:12 we are told, **“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”**

Isn't it amazing how we think we know better than God? And we may think, with these temptations, "*Well, I know what the Bible says, but that is not for me. I can handle it!*" No, you can't!

If you could, if this was not a problem, if this was not going to hurt you, why in the world would God warn you not to go down that path? He wouldn't but it is dangerous and for Samson, he thought what he was doing was fine, but in the end, death and destruction will come upon him.

It is as Paul said in Galatians 6:7-8, "**Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.**"

Make no mistake about it, God means it. What you sow you will reap and if it is to the flesh, it will not be good. But, if you sow to the Spirit, follow what God is showing you, then it is a blessing. It may not be easy, but it will be good!

And please understand that we don't have to go down that path and succumb to these temptations.

Paul tells us in Romans 13:14, "**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**"

When you get up in the morning you need to start your day with Jesus. Why? So that you don't make any provision, give any opportunity for the flesh to get hold of you when you start your day because, more than likely, that flesh will continue with you throughout the day. ***PUT ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST!***

Also, listen to what Solomon wrote in Proverbs 4:14-19, **“Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on. For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence. But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble.”**

Notice the comparison with the wicked and the just. The wicked, those that are doing things against God, are stuck on doing evil, they want to see people fall, they steal, there is violence, and-so-on.

Now you may be thinking, *“Hey, wait a minute. I don’t do those things. So what if I am sleeping with my girlfriend, it isn’t hurting anyone!”*

You may feel that way, but God feels completely differently about that. And you can put any sin in there but if you are not doing things that God has said, then what you are doing is evil.

God is good, and the Devil is evil and he will use this worlds influence upon you and you can try to justify it all you want, like Samson did, but with God, He will not accept it.

For the just, those who are following God, not perfect because none of us are, but our hearts desire is to do the things of God, we will shine forth the light of Christ.

Make no mistake about it, the works of the flesh lead to destruction and if you doubt that still, listen to what Paul said in Galatians 5:19-21, **“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.”**

So we do have a choice on the path we want to walk on and there are consequences for both. For the just or those following the Lord, there are the blessings. For the wicked or those who are walking apart from God, there is death and destruction in their lives.

And I know that some think that they can handle it, but let me say this, and it is our last point, there is ***NO VICTORY*** when you succumb to the flesh, ***NONE AT ALL!***

VERSE 3

Now I think, by his actions, he realized what these men were doing and thus, he waited until midnight until he tried to escape.

And the city gates were closed and thus, how in the world was he going to get out of town before his enemies found him?

Well, Samson did what any strong man would do, he pulled them out of the ground. These gates did not keep Samson locked inside the city!

Now Samson not only removes the gates, but he places them upon his shoulders and carries them off to a hill that faces Hebron.

Now Hebron itself was some twenty miles away and as you read this verse it does not say he carried them to Hebron but again, I think he took them to the top of the hill on a road that was leading to Hebron.

But think about that for a minute. I don't care how strong you think you are, you are not going to be able to pull up the gates of the city, the posts out of the ground and then carry them all the way to the top of a hill.

Maybe if you gave me a few months I could get the equipment to do it, but not in my own strength and I don't think Samson did this in his own strength, I don't think he was that physically strong.

I believe again that it was the Spirit of God that empowered him despite the sin he was involved in but that is going to change shortly as we will see.

“Well Pastor Joe, isn't that a victory for Samson and the children of Israel?”

Again, think about what he accomplished here. He took the gates of the city down, and yes, that was there for their protection, and they would eventually get the gates back, but how many of the Philistines were destroyed here? ***NONE!*** Thus, no real victory.

Did God use Samson?

Yes, He did. And it was not because Samson was this man of God, but God used him even though he was involved in sin to accomplish His purposes, His plan, even though the enemy was not destroyed. The life of Samson was spared!

Make no mistake about it, Samson was a man who was controlled by his fleshly desires and not by the Spirit of God!

Again, you might not agree with me, but look at what some of these other Judges did and what Samson accomplished so far.

Look at the Judge Othniel and what we are told of him. In Judges 3:9-11 we are told, **“When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim. So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.”**

He defeated the enemy and was able to bring rest to the land of Israel for forty years! Not so with Samson!

We see the Judge Ehud, who killed the King of Moab and defeated the Moabites and we are told, **“And at that time they killed about ten thousand men of Moab, all stout men of valor; not a man escaped. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.”** Judges 3:29-30.

Ehud and the children of Israel defeated the Moabites, but we don’t see anything like that with Samson!

We see that Deborah and Barak defeat Jabin the King of Canaan and his military leader Sisera, and the land had rest for forty years. Again, we don’t see that with Samson, not at all! He was a loner, he didn’t work with anyone and in his battles against the Philistines, it was not for God, it was not for the children of Israel, it was because they did something that upset him so he killed a few Philistines, but he did not deliver the children of Israel from the bondage that they were in with the Philistines!

And we can look at other Judges as well, and it is the same story. They saw the victory as they walked with God. With Samson, we see some small victories, but he was not walking with God and those were not deliverances from the enemy, the Philistines. And, in the end, Samson is going to be so far away from God that we are told that, “**. . . he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.**” Judges 16:20.

For us as Christians, we can grieve the Holy Spirit, we can quench the work that the Holy Spirit wants to do in our lives by giving in to temptation, and we, like Samson, will not be victorious in what we do, not at all!

These are powerful warnings to each of us because none of us are above these temptations. Yes, God will use them to test our faith, but never forget Satan is right there to tempt us to sin with the same situation. Don't give in, don't surrender to him, but walk with God and see the deliverance He will bring to the situations that you are facing and let your faith grow as you are tested in these fires!

Let me close with this illustration. We are told,

A young man, who had previously kept a good reputation, was arrested on the charge of being implicated in an extensive robbery.

The trial developed the fact that he had been a tool in the hands of others, and that his part in the matter had been that of showing the men the places where they were likely to get the largest returns.

The judge was at first disposed to believe the young man's statement that he had never before stepped aside from the path of rectitude [decency].

However, his suspicions were aroused by the fact that the boy had been singled out from among all his associates and approached with the proposal that he take part in the robbery.

“A young man who received such a proposal had done something to invite it,” the judge declared.

Subsequent developments proved that he was right. Those who asked his aid would not have dared to do so if they had not believed that he was for sale.

While it is true that all men must meet temptation, it is not a favorable omen when evildoers make bold to ask us to join them in their deeds. We may be above that which they would have us do, but we have at least not kept our colors where they ought to be.

- Practical Bible Illustrations from Yesterday and Today

How true that is! May we, as Paul admonishes us in Ephesians 4:1, “**I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.**”

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**I THEREFORE, the prisoner for the Lord, appeal to and beg you to walk (lead a life) worthy of the [divine] calling to which you have been called [with behavior that is a credit to the summons to God's service.]**”

The Living Bible puts it like this, “**I beg you-I, a prisoner here in jail for serving the Lord-to live and act in a way worthy of those who have been chosen for such wonderful blessings as these.**”

May we walk worthy of that high calling by which we have been called and not surrender to temptations, may we not place ourselves in situations where we might be tempted, but let the Lord test our faith and one day we will come forth like pure gold!