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Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, October 26, 2008
Life-Changing Lessons From Biblical Personalities
""The Lure Of Temptation"" (Samson)
Judges 16:4-21

A pastor parked his car in a no-parking zone in a large city because he was short of time and couldn't find a space with a meter. Then he put a note under the windshield wiper that read: "I have circled the block 10 times. If I don't park here, I'll miss my appointment. Forgive us our trespasses."

When the pastor returned, he found a citation from a police officer along with this note. "I've circled this block for 10 years. If I don't give you a ticket, I'll lose my job. Lead us not into temptation."

Someone has said this about temptation, "Opportunity may knock once, but temptation bangs on your front door forever." Perhaps better stated "Opportunity may knock once, but temptation bangs on your front door your entire life on planet earth."

I'm sure all of us deal with temptation at different times and from different sources. Does God have any help for us in this matter of temptation?

As we continue on with our consideration of "Life-Changing Lessons From Biblical Personalities," we come to the man, Samson, who was tempted and didn't do so well in that temptation. What happened is not the easiest to understand, yet Samson's life can provide valuable instruction for all of us.

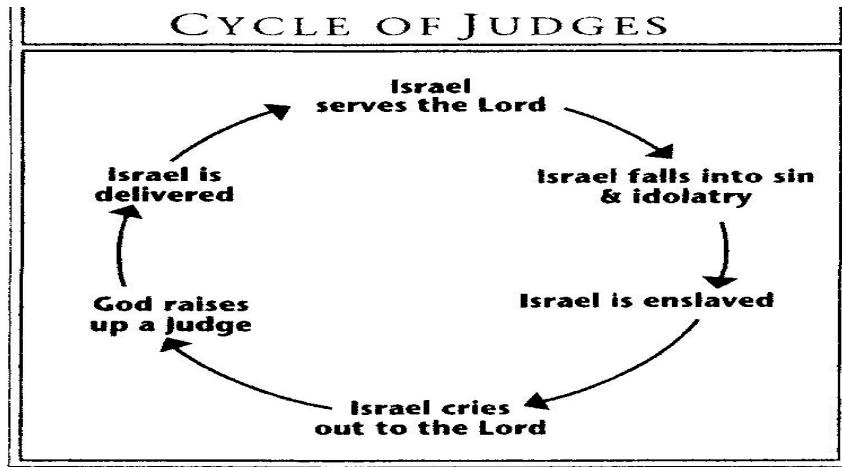
Samson was the 12th and last judge in the history of Israel around 1085 B.C.

Nearly a fifth of the book of Judges is given to Samson's life. Let's look first of all, then, at the times in which Samson was born.

I. The times in which Samson was born (Judges 13:1).

The nation of Israel continued to repeat its apostasy, it's turning away from God. What is recorded in Judges 13:1 is the 7th recorded turning away from God in the Book of Judges (3:5-7, 12-17; 4:1-3; 6:1-2; 8:33-35; 10:6-9).

This may have been part of the total abandonment of the worship of Jehovah recorded in Judges 10:6 which tell us that Israel went after the gods of the different people in the land with them. Note the cycle again that became the pattern in the history of Israel in the Book Of Judges.



During the time that Samson was born and became judge in Israel, the nation of Israel did not cry out in repentance to God as the nation had done at other times. Why? Times evidently were good, and Israel accepted the Philistine rule. In fact, Israel came to resent Samson's exploits to deliver them as told in Judges 15:10-15.

What the LORD did at this time was to raise up not a national deliverer, but one man to wage war against the Philistines whose gods Israel was worshipping.

God did not want his people to lose their identity and corrupt the line of the Savior.

The environment into which Samson would be born, then, was one of idolatry and immorality, and the people seemed content to let their enemies rule over them - A sad state of affairs to say the least.

The people had so accommodated themselves to the world's life-style that they no longer thought their commitment to God was necessary. In fact, they must have forgotten what that was supposed to be. Furthermore from Judges 15:10, it is apparent that the Israelites were ignored by the enemy. The Israelites did the enemies' work. A pathetic situation as the spiritual lethargy of the people is so apparent. They had no spiritual discernment. They had no spiritual life. They were content to live in idolatry and live a life of disobedience to God.

Question, on this Sunday, a little over a week before the national election, has America gotten to the point of living in such a state of not acknowledging God that it lacks discernment regarding the value of life and the need for marriage to be between one man and one woman? If so, we may seem some drastic changes in our country after the election on November 4.

II. The home into which Samson was born (Judges 13:2-25).

1. Manoah and his wife lived at Zorah, and she was barren and had born not children (13:2).

2. The angel of the LORD appeared first to her and said, "Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. Now therefore, be careful to drink wine or strong drink or eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines." (13:4-5).

The angel of the LORD appearing to the wife of Manoah was a theophany, a preincarnate manifestation of Jesus Christ. His words to her were that a miracle would take place for Manoah and his wife. She would have a baby boy, although barren, and he would be a Nazirite.

Now the word, Nazirite means to separate or abstain. John the Baptist was a Nazirite (Luke 1:15, 80; and the Apostle Paul was a Nazirite (Acts 18:18).

From Numbers 6:1-8 we discover that a Nazirite was to:

- (1) Abstain from the fruit of the vine and any strong drink, indicating that he was dedicated to the simple life.**
- (2) Refrain from cutting his hair as a public sign of his vow to God.**
- (3) Avoid contact with a dead body, and act that would disqualify him for tabernacle worship.**

This vow could be made by either male or female, and the person was bound by this vow of consecration to God's service for a specific period of time (perhaps like the apostle Paul) or in some cases for life, which was the case with Samson.

What this all meant for Samson when he was born was that He was to be kept for God and live for Him always. He had been

chosen by the LORD to deliver Israel from the Philistines (13:5). Even though Israel did not repent of their sin, the LORD would use Samson to deliver the Israelites. His mercy is always greater than our sin.

3. The wife of Manoah told her husband about the angel of the LORD appearing to her and telling her that she would have a son, who was to be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death (13:6-7).

4. The angel of the LORD appeared a second time to the wife of Manoah and Manoah (13:8-23). Manoah asked the LORD to please send the man of God again so he could teach them what to do with the boy (13:8).

5. The angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah's wife in the field when Manoah wasn't there (13:9).

6. The wife of Manoah ran quickly to her husband and had him come to where the angel of the LORD was located. Manoah asked the angel of the LORD what should be the boy's mode of life and his vocation? The angel told Manoah basically the same information that he had previously told his wife (13:10-14).

7. Manoah asked if he could prepare a young goat for his guest, which was a customary thing to do for a guest in those days, prepare a meal. The messenger of the LORD said that he would not eat the food, but it would be a burnt offering unto the LORD, for Manoah did not know that this person was the angel of the LORD (13:15-17).

8. Manoah asked the man what his name was so that when his words come to pass, they may honor him. The angel of the LORD told Manoah that his name was Wonderful (a name used to describe Christ in Isaiah 9:6). (13:18).

9. Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the LORD. The angel of the LORD performed wonders and went up in the flame from the sacrifice into heaven (13:19-20a).

10. Manoah and his wife fell on their faces to the ground. They worshipped, for they realized that they were in the presence of the

LORD. They realized that if he had not accepted their sacrifice, they would not have died (13;20b-23).

11. Samson was born just as the angel of the LORD said, and the child grew up and the LORD blessed him (13:24).

12. The Spirit of the LORD began to stir him where he resided (13:25).

Even though the nation of Israel at this time was living in idolatry and seemed content, there were still those in Israel who would respond to a revelation of God to them, such as the wife of Manoah and Manoah himself. They not only responded in faith to what the LORD said but kept their promise to the LORD to raise Samson as a Nazirite for they realized that God has chosen him for a special purpose to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

How refreshing to know that in the midst of an idolatrous nation, there were still those who would listen to the LORD when He showed up. That is still true in our country today, as you respond to the LORD in faith in the midst of a country where God and followers of Christ are made fun of in the public arena. God honors those who honor HIM.

III. The Marriage of Samson (Judges 14).

Judges 14 is not an easy chapter to process as we have the full revelation of God today in the Bible.

At the same time we see that our choices do not thwart the purposes of God.

1. Samson meets a woman about 4 miles from home who is a Philistine (14:1-4).

According to Deuteronomy 7:3-4, the Israelites were not to intermarry with the ungodly nations. That's why Samson's father and mother told him to find a wife among Israel.

But more was at stake here: "However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines." (14:4).

2. Samson kills a lion, going to see the Philistine girl he likes. (14:5-9).

The Spirit of the LORD comes mightily on Samson on his way to Timnah, and he kills the lion with his hands. Samson liked the looks of the woman. Samson based his liking for the Philistine woman on appearance (14:8). Returning home, he found bees in the carcass of the lion and took the honey and went on his way, and gave some to his mother and father when he returned home (14:9).

3. Samson prepares a feast for the upcoming wedding (14:10-18).

Samson makes an deal with the thirty wedding guests that if they can guess his riddle within 7 days he will give them thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes.

The wedding guests can't guess the riddle, so his wife to be weeps before him seven days, and finally Samson tells her the answer to the riddle – sweeter than honey and stronger than a lion – cf the riddle in Judges 14:14.

She tells those at the wedding feast, and he knows then that she has told them (14:18).

4. The Spirit of the LORD came upon Samson and killed 30 of those who lived in Ashkeon and gave the changes of their clothes to those who told the riddle (14:19a).

5. Samson burned with anger. (14:19b).

6. Samson's wife to be was given to His companion who had been a friend (14:20).

Samson, then, did not marry the Philistine woman, and God used that unusual situation to accomplish His purpose through Samson in an unusual way.

IV. The Adventures of Samson (Judges 15:1-20).

1. Samson discovered that who he thought was his wife had been given to his companion, resulting in Samson becoming very angry, taking 300 foxes, tying their tails together by two, and releasing them into the shocks, standing grain, and vineyards and groves (15:1-5). Their three main crops were destroyed.

2. The Philistines ask some in Israel who would do such a thing. They were told that it was Samson and why he did it. As a result, they burned with fire the woman and her father (15:6).

3. **Samson responded with force with a great slaughter (15:8).**
4. **The sad state of Israel spiritually and morally for they have accepted the rule of the Philistines over them and questioned Samson's killing the Philistines. In fact they ask Samson if they can bind him and give him to the Philistines (15:9-13).**

This is hard to believe. They were so accustomed to living an ungodly life with the ungodly Philistines that they did not want their life-style disturbed.

Francis Shaeffer used to say that we accommodate our life-style to the world when we adopt two values of the world: Personal Peace & affluence. We want a personal life-style undisturbed and we think that our affluence gives us a higher level of existence.

Another writer points out that the Israelites were ignored by the enemy (Judges 15:10).

Today we should be concerned if Satan ignores us. Actually the Israelites who came to capture Samson were doing the enemies' bidding. By capturing Samson they thought that they were fighting the Philistine's battle. Question for all of us: "Are we on the LORD's side?"

5. **The Spirit of the LORD came upon Samson, he broke the ropes on his arms as if they were flax, found the fresh jawbone of a donkey and killed a thousand Philistines (15:14-20).**

Samson called the place from which he drew the jawbone of the donkey, "Ramath-lehi – meaning the height, the hill of the jawbone."

After the battle, Samson became very thirsty, and called out to the LORD, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant, and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?"

God heard Samson's cry for help, and provided him water out of a hollow place. When Samson drank, his strength returned by God's refreshing water.

This was a cry like Elijah in I Kings 9:14). Samson called the place, "En-hakkore – which means "the spring of the caller."

God took care of his servant in spite of his seeming lack of wisdom and time and the temper he displayed at times. God used him in spite of his feet of clay.

God gave Israel 20 years of peace with Samson as judge (15:20).

V. The Downfall of Samson (Judges 16).

1. Samson's sin at Gaza (Judges 16:1-3).

- (1) Samson's weakness displayed in that he lusted after a Philistine harlot (16:1).**
- (2) Discovering that Samson was there, the people surrounded the city thinking to capture this one who had caused disrupted the lives of the Philistines (16:2).**
- (3) Samson arose at midnight and took hold of the city gates along with its two posts and bars, put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the mountain which is opposite Hebron (16:3).**

This quite a feat to say the least. The gates could have been a thickness of about 3 feet with an approximate height of 9 feet, weighing something like 10,000 pounds. Even if the gates had been a thickness of about 2 feet, they would have weighed over 5000 pounds.

Either way, Samson's action was a miracle performed by God's power.

Then Samson proceeded to carry the posts and two doors of the city gate 36 miles from Gaza to Hebron with a change in altitude upward of about 3200 feet.

A city was not secure in that day without its city gates. Removing the gates brought great humiliation and shame to the city.

We see here the patience of God with Samson, using him in spite of his sin. It is evident of how corrupt the people of God were at that time, that God had to use someone who sinned to accomplish His purposes.

2. Samson's sin at Sorek (Judges 16:4-20).

(1) Samson did not discipline himself in his lust after women (16:4).

In so doing he was breaking the commandments of God in having relationships with a woman outside of marriage, while breaking God's law of being involved with the enemy, the Philistines.

(2) Delilah tempted Samson (16:4-2).

The lords of the Philistines came to Delilah and told her that they would give her 1100 pieces of silver if she could find out where Samson's strength was so that they could capture him (16:5).

****First time - Delilah asked Samson where his strength was (16:6-9).**

Samson told her that if she bound him with 7 fresh cords, bowstrings, then he would become weak. Delilah bound him, and told him the Philistines were upon him, and Samson broke the cords immediately, like when raw flax fibers touch a fire.

****Second time – Delilah tells Samson that he has deceived her. She says to please tell me how you may be bound (16:10-12)**

Samson replies that if he is bound with new ropes he will become weak. Delilah bound Samson with new ropes and said, "The Philistines are upon you." He snapped the ropes like thread.

****Third time – Delilah tells Samson again that you have deceived me and told me lies. Tell me how you may be bound (16:13-14).**

Samson tells her that if his hair is woven into seven locks and fasten with a pin his power would be gone. While he slept, Delilah weaves Samson's hair into seven locks, and cries, "The Philistines are upon you." Samson awoke from his sleep and pulled out the pin in locks.

****Fourth time and daily Delilah pressed Samson to tell her how come he had so much strength (6:15-16).**

****Samson finally was annoyed so much by Delilah's proding and telling him that he deceived her, that Samson told her where his strength resided (6:17-20).**

Letting his love for a woman direct his thinking, Samson told Delilah that it was because he was a Nazirite to God from his mother's womb,

and his head had never been shaven. If his hair was shaven, he would have no strength and become very weak.

Delilah realized that Samson had told her his heart, and contacted the lord of the Philistines to be ready to capture Samson when she gave the word. She had them ready to capture Samson before, but he always showed his strength was still there.

Delilah caused Samson to sleep on her knees, and while he was sleeping she called for a man to come and shave off his hair. She began to afflict him. He awoke and his strength had left him. She called out, "The Philistines are upon you." He awoke from his sleep and said that he would go out and do what he had done before, but he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

3. The consequences of Samson's sin – God's punishment displayed (16:21-27).

(1) The Philistines captured Samson and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains. He was put to grinding out grain in prison, which was a task that women used to do. It was really slave labor.

(2) During this time Samson's hair began to grow out (16:22).

(3) The Philistine lords gathered to offer sacrifice for to their god, Dagon, a vegetation god of the Philistines, rejoicing that Dagon had given them Samson into their hands. They praised their god Dagon for giving their enemy Samson into their hands, the one who had destroyed many of their people (16:23-24).

(4) When the people were in high spirits, they asked that Samson be brought in to amuse them. They had him stand between two pillars (16:25-26).

(5) Samson told the boy who was holding his hand to help him find the pillars the house rested so he could lean on them. The house was full of men and women, and the lords of the Philistines – some 3000 people were on the roof, as people watched Samson (16:27).

VI. God's victory over the enemy through Samson (Judges 16:28-31).

One commentator has suggested that while in prison Samson may have had a spiritual revival.

For note what Samson did.

1. He called to the LORD and said, "O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes" (16:28).
2. Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and braced himself against them with his right hand and his left hand (16:29).
3. Samson cried out to let him die with the Philistines, and he pushed with all his might and the entire house came down upon all the Philistines and Samson died with them (16:30). Delilah was more than likely in the celebration to the pagan god, Dagon.
4. His family came down and buried Samson in the tomb of his father, Manoah (16:31).

What an account of a man who as a boy was dedicated to the LORD, to be separated to HIM all his life, but Samson did not control himself when tempted, nor did he obey the Lord's word. As a result Samson got into all kinds of trouble, yet God brought good out of Samson's life when he called on Him and helped him defeat the enemy. In fact, Samson is listed in Hebrews 11:32 as one who exhibited faith in the LORD.

Need to ask: "What are the life-changing lessons we can learn from the life of Samson?"

1. We need to know that temptation is a luring away, the enticement, to do what is against the biblical God and His Word. Samson's problems came, of course, because he yielded to temptation. He did not do what God said. He let his lustful thinking overtake his life.

2. The Lord himself experienced temptation by Satan three times, and also tempted by Peter. Jesus was tempted in all points like as we yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus, although tempted, never yielded to temptation. He never

sinned. That's why Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice for sin, while also being the ultimate example for the believer to emulate to not yield to temptation in the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. We will all experience temptation at different times, basically from three areas, the world system – philosophy – thinking of the world – anti biblical world view, the old Adamic nature, the old flesh, which has a mind, emotion and will (the advertising world appeals to our old nature, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life), and the devil himself (cf. I John 2:15-17).

4. When tempted to sin, we should not toy with temptation. We don't need to try to analyze what kind of temptation it is, but not yield to it. Samson kept toying with temptation in the situation with Delilah. His love for the wrong woman caused his downfall. How unlike Joseph who fled when tempted by the wife of Potiphar. Temptation must be dealt with head on. We are to flee immorality (I Corinthians 6:18) and flee idolatry (I Corinthians 10:14).

5. The believer needs to realize that when a temptation is yielded to and is not dwelt with before the LORD, and perhaps with another person if the sin is against someone, it becomes easier to keep on yielding to temptation. The person becomes a slave to sin (John 8:34; Romans 6:13, 17). That is what happened to Samson.

Soon the temptation is no longer a temptation, but just part of the individual's life. This is what happened to the nation of Israel during the time of Samson. They had not just yielded to idolatry and immorality, it became a life-style for them, so they had no spiritual sensitivity anymore to God and his word. They were even ready to help the enemy capture Samson.

I am concerned that may even be happening to some believers today in our country who don't see that the value of life and biblical marriage are the basis of our society. It's the economy, they say, which is certainly in rough shape, but why did it get that way? Greed and corruption which comes from the heart. Without life having a moral and spiritual value created by God, one can do what one pleases without considering how it may affect others.

6. The believer needs to guard his or her heart in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The man of wisdom penned, "Guard, watch your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life" (4:23).

That's why Paul penned in II Corinthians 10:5 tells us through the direction of the Spirit of God, "to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

To the Ephesians Paul wrote that we don't wrestle against flesh and blood but against rulers, against powers, against the world forces of the darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in high places. (6:12).

We need to use the shield of faith, to be able to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and use the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:16-17).

Samson was tempted by immorality and yielded. He had to bear the consequences of his sin.

There are great temptations to immorality in our world, from the enticement through advertising, the Hollywood screen, and the internet where pornography can be brought into the privacy of one's home. Men don't get caught by this enticement and ruin your marriage. Teenage guys and young unmarried men, don't get involved in pornography which can ruin your spiritual life. Don't dabble in any of it, for it's like eating a salted cracker, the more you eat the more you want. Keep your life pure until you are married, and God will bless you for it.

But immorality is not just a temptation in our society, but also in our relationships with others we may be put down, or we have an argument, and we are tempted to respond in kind, and sometimes we give away a piece of our mind that we can't afford to lose.

There may also be a temptation for power, for money, or ambition.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Christian pastor and theologian, was executed for contributing to a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler and resisting Germany's Nazi regime in other ways. He wrote the following about temptation.

In our members, there is a slumbering inclination towards the desire which is both sudden and fierce. With irresistible power, desire seizes mastery over the flesh. All at once a secret, smoldering fire is kindled. The flesh burns and is in flames. It makes no difference whether it is a sexual desire, or ambition, or vanity, or desire for revenge, or love of fame and power, or greed for money, or finally, that strange desire for the beauty of the world, of nature.

Joy in God is . . . extinguished in us and we seek all our joy in the creature. At this moment God is quite unreal to us. He loses all reality and only the desire for the creature is real; the only reality is the devil. Satan does not fill us with the hatred of God, but with the forgetfulness of God. And now his falsehood is added to this proof of strength.

The lust thus aroused envelopes the mind and will of man in the deepest darkness. The powers of clear discrimination and of decision are taken from us. The questions present themselves: "Is what the flesh desires really sin in this case?" Is it really not permitted to me, yes, expected of me, now, here, in my particular situation, to appease desire?"

7. The believer should use daily the victory over temptation he or she has in Jesus Christ.

(1) Realize daily that he or she is a conqueror, a victor in Christ.

Romans 8:37 tells us that believers are overwhelmingly conquerors through Christ who loved us. How about that! Believers are not victims of their circumstances, but rather victors in Jesus Christ. Do we see ourselves as followers of Christ victors over temptation, not victims of temptation. We have that privilege to know that we are victors in Christ!!

(2) Know what the Word of God says.

Why did Christ win over Satan's temptation in the wilderness? He knew what the Word of God said about the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. In his life, He knew what the word of God said about sin and about forgiveness.

(3) Do what the Word of God says.

Use the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit to do what the Bible says and thusly not yield to temptation.

Paul told the Galatians to keep walking in the Spirit and they would not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

We must keep in mind as we face temptation that God's word has supernatural power to change our thought patterns and our attitudes.

Use the Word of God – I Peter 1:16 – “Be you holy for I am holy.” The word of God is like a light switch. You have to use it in order to get light.

(4) Keep sensitive to and have a reverence, an awe, for the presence of God in one's personal life.

Satan loves to cause us to forget that God is with us and lives in us spiritually – Actually the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live in the believer spiritually. That's why Paul told the Corinthians, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and you are not your own, you are bought with a price (really the precious blood of Jesus Christ), so glorify God in your body (cf. I Corinthians 6:19-20). The believer is to seek to please the Lord not himself (II Corinthians 5:14-15).

(5) Enjoy one's fellowship with the LORD.

Paul penned to the Philippians that I might know HIM – Christ – Philippians 3:10.

I press on toward the goal which is Christ – Philippians 3:14.

Rejoice in the Lord – Philippians 4:4 - Be excited about your relationship with the LORD, and then when temptation comes, you will be quick to not yield and go on your way rejoicing in the LORD.

(6) Use the talents and spiritual gifts God has given to the individual so God will be glorified in the believer's life (I Peter 4:10).

God used Samson sometimes when he wasn't in the will of God, but eventually he brought His punishment on Samson for his disobedience. How much greater would Samson's contribution have been to God's kingdom if he would have live a pure life of obedience to his LORD. May we all finish well in our walk with the LORD.

Let's live victoriously this week, and when tempted, not yield to temptation, but do God's will in the power of the Holy Spirit!

