



Judges 13-16

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Tape #7075
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Lets turn to Judges Chapter 13. The same old sad refrain.

And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord (13:1).

This is the seventh time that we hear this mournful refrain in the book of Judges, the seventh apostasy, and as the result,

the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years (13:1).

The prophet came to Asa the King, upon his return from victory near the beginning of his reign in II Chronicles 14 and he said unto him, "The Lord is with you while you'll be with him and if you seek him, he will be found of you. But if you forsake him, he will forsake you." Now that's just basic. That didn't go just for King Asa. That goes for you today. The Lord will be with you, if you'll be with Him. If you seek Him, you'll find Him. If you forsake Him, He will forsake you. The children of Israel forsook the Lord. They did evil in the sight of the Lord and God delivered them into the hands of their enemies, this time the Philistines.

The people, the Canaanite people, called the Philistines, populated the coastal region in the southern part of Israel. One of the cites of the Philistines, Ashkelon, is still a city in Israel today. Gaza of course, you hear a lot about the Gaza Strip. The city of Gath today is nothing but ruins. There is a new Israeli settlement nearby Gath, um but it's the coastal region in the southern part of Israel was the area that was occupied by the Canaanites known as the Philistines, and from them the name Palestine comes.

Now there was a certain man of Zorah, which is west from Jerusalem, towards Tel Aviv about a third of the way to Tel Aviv. It's just at the base of what they call the Jerusalem mountains. From Zorah, you go on up the mountains to Jerusalem. The other way, you go on down the valley from Zorah to Timnah to the uh airport, to the Ben Gurion airport which is at the city of Lod, the biblical city of Lydda, and then on to Tel Aviv, or to Joppa and uh, there is Zorah right at the base of what is known as the Jerusalem mountains, where the tribe of Dan first settled. The tribe of Dan later moved on up into the northern part of the country near mount Hermon in upper Galilee, but the tribe of Dan originally settled in this area next to the Philistines, but because the Philistines were tough, they found it hard to settle in that area and hence moved.

This man's name was Manoah and his wife was barren. Now that was a cultural curse. The most important thing that a woman could do in that culture, was to bear children. If she could not bear children, she was considered cursed by God. It was legal grounds for divorce. If your wife could not bear you a child, you could legally divorce her. It was, it was just considered a um disgrace for a woman not to be able to bear children and thus, it was always a heavy pressure upon a young girl to bear a child so that she is not shamed with barrenness.

There were other cases. We remember the case of Abraham's wife, Sarah. There was the case of Samuel's mother which we will get to in a few weeks, as we come to I Samuel and we'll be dealing with Hannah. In the New Testament there was Elizabeth, uh though mother of John the Baptist, who for years was barren; and, so those that sort of had to endure the shame of the cultural curse, so the wife of Manoah.

"But the Angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, "Behold, you are barren, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now, therefore be careful, I pray thee. Don't drink any wine or strong drink, nor eat any thing that is unclean. For lo you are going to conceive and bear a son and no razor shall come on his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God, from the womb and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines." (13:3-5)

And so, as the result of her barrenness, the angel of the Lord appeared and informed her that she was no longer to be barren. She was going to have a son, that God was going to use this son, to begin to deliver the children of Israel but, during her time of pregnancy, she is not to drink any wine, or any strong drink, not to eat anything unclean and when the child is born, a razor is never to come to his head for he is going to be a

Nazarite unto God.

Now, back in Numbers chapter six it deals with the vow of the Nazarite. But in Numbers chapter six, this Nazarite vow was only for a specified period of time, a time in which you wanted to totally dedicate yourself to God. So you might say well, I want to give the next month completely unto God. And to take the Nazarite vow you would shave your head, first of all, completely. Your beard and everything else and then for this month's time, you would seek the Lord. You would not work, you would not drink any wine or anything that came from the vine, actually you wouldn't even eat grapes. Most nothing that came from the vine and it would be a time of real dedication and real consecration, commitment of your life to God. At the end of the thirty days or sixty days, or whatever specified time, you would then shave your head again, you wouldn't, you wouldn't cut your hair during this period of time, but at the end of it you'd shave your head once more and you'd bring the hair that had grown in that thirty day or sixty day period, you'd bring that to the priest and he would offer it as a burnt offering unto the Lord. He'd put it on the altar and burn it and it was the vow, uh the Nazarite the vow of consecration unto God.

Paul the apostle, in the book of Acts, chapter 17, made such a vow. He took a Nazarite vow and uh dedicated himself totally unto God for a specified period of time to prepare himself for the feast, for he was heading back to Jerusalem. So this young man that is to be born though is not to have a time limit on his commitment, but it was to be a life-long commitment unto God. He's gonna belong to the Lord, he's going to be committed unto God throughout his life and so for all of his life, a razor is never to come to his head.

"So the woman came and told her husband, and she said there was a man of God that came to me and his countenance, his face was like an angel of God(13:6)..

It was a very awesome, the old English word terrible, is a bad translation today. It is literally awesome. He was awesome!

But I did not ask him where he came from, and he didn't tell me his name (13:6).

And so she comes home and tells him, I met an interesting man he had a face like an angel. I don't know where he came from, I didn't ask him his name but he told me that I was going to conceive and bear a son, and so I wasn't to drink any wine or strong drink and I wasn't to eat any unclean thing, for the child will be a Nazarite to God from the womb, until the day of his death. His whole life is to be spent committed unto God.

"So Manoah, her husband, prayed and he asked the Lord to let the man of God come again to us and teach us what we should do for this child that's to be born. So God listened, or hearkened to the voice of Manoah. The Angel of God came again to the woman, as she sat in the field, but her husband wasn't with her. So she said, "Would you wait here a minute?" and she ran with haste and got her husband and she said to him, "Behold, the man has appeared unto me, that came to me the other day". So, Manoah arose and went with his wife and they came to the man and said unto him, he said unto him, "Are you the man that spoke with this woman?" And he said, "I am." And Manoah said, "Now let your words come to pass. We would like to have a son but how shall we order the child? What shall we do to him?" And the Angel of the Lord said to Manoah, "Just everything that I told the woman, be careful that you do that." She may not eat of anything that comes of the vine, neither let her drink any wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. All that I have commanded her, let her observe." So Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, "I pray thee, let us detain you until we can make ready for you a little uh shish kebab, a kid, and then they used those little goats for shish kebab, and the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, "Though you detain me, I will not eat of your bread, and if you want to offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the Lord, for Manoah did not know that he was an Angel of the Lord. And so, Manoah said unto the Angel of the Lord, "What is your name? That when all of this comes to pass we'll be able to say, well, you know, uh we'll want to give you honor, we'll want to recognize you for this." And the Angel of the Lord said unto him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing that it is wonderful?"

The word translated here "secret" is the same word that is used in the Greek in Isaiah the prophecy concerning Jesus, His name shall be called "Wonderful". Same Greek word. Why do you ask my name seeing that it is wonderful?

So Manoah took the little goat with the meal offering, and he put it on the rock, offered it unto the Lord, and the Angel did wonderously as Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass when the flame went

up toward heaven, from off the altar, that the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on and they fell on their faces to the ground. And the Angel of the Lord did not appear again to Manoah and to his wife and Manoah knew that it was the Angel of the Lord; and, he said to his wife, we're gonna die. Because we've seen God. We've had it. That's it! You know, it's all over! We've seen God! His wife having a little more presence of mind said to him, "If the Lord wanted to kill us, why would he tell us we are going to have a son? How can we have a son if God kills us; and, why would He have received our burnt offering and our meal offering? And so, the woman bear a son, called his name Samson, which refers to the son; and, you have Mahaneh Dan right near the valley of Zorah there, between Eshtaol and Zorah, and the child grew. The Lord blessed him and the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol. (13:8-25) So, the birth of the child, announced before hand by the Lord. A special child.

Chapter 14

Now as the child grew up, Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah with the daughters of the Philistines.

Now Timnah is at the western end of the valley, as you're right in the mountains, right at the base of the mountains, is uh, Zorah. Eshtaol is just across the little valley from Zorah that you, standing at the sight, you can look over and you can see the little area Zorah, and you can see Eshtaol on the other side; and, then the valley that goes down from there, about two and a half miles down the valley you come to Timnah. It was at the other end of the valley and this is the valley that was occupied by the Philistines. The people of Dan pretty much hugged the hillsides and the plains were controlled pretty much by the Philistines.

Samson went down the valley to Timnah, a Philistine city, he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines, and he came home and told his father and his mother, I have seen a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines, and I want you to get her for me as my wife. (14: 1-2)

Now in those days, marriage was by arrangement. The parents would get together and they would haggle over a dowry; and, once the amount of the dowry was determined the groom's father would pay the bride's father the dowry and uh he then had the privilege of marrying the girl. A dowry was their answer to their weak divorce laws that gave a woman no rights. A woman could not divorce her husband under any circumstance, a husband could divorce his wife under any circumstance. If he didn't like her, if he wasn't satisfied with her, if she didn't fix his eggs to his liking, he could just write, I divorce you, hand her the paper, and she had to leave. She had no rights at all; and of course you got a bunch of crummy guys that would take advantage of that. And so the custom of dowry, developed to protect the women, for dowry was nothing more than alimony, in advance. So the dad would make the arrangements. You pay me so much, you can have my daughter. It was the father's duty to invest that alimony into or the dowry, and to use it in investing and all, so that if, in time, the guy would ever say, "Get out! I divorce you!" then as she comes home, there's money to support her. There's money to live on, she's not a burden to the family but, she's already got her money, and the father has kept the money in tact for her. And that was the father's duty to keep the dowry in tact and invest, and all, so that she would always have uh something to fall back on, should her husband divorce her. And so the parents would make this arrangement.

So Samson came home and said hey dad, saw a cute little chick down there in Timnah, daughter of the Philistines, go down and make the arrangements! I want to marry this girl! And his father and his mother said to him, aren't there enough cute little chicks around Israel here? The daughters of your own brothers? Why do you have to fall in love with one of those uncircumcised Philistine daughters? And Samson turned and said to his father, no lip dad, just do what I ask you. You know, get her for me! She pleases me! Falling in love with a Philistine girl, this is the first time, but not the last time for Samson. Each time it led him to great trouble. Now I know that some of the romanticists will say that you can't help who you fall in love with. With starry eyes and you know, love is something that, you know, when Cupid shoots his arrow, you've had it! I mean, what can you do? You can't help who you fall in love with. Yes you can! That's a fallacy to think that you can't help, who you fall, of course you can help who you fall in love with. You see,

he fell in love with a girl in Timnah. But actually, he had no business being in Timnah, and had he never gone to Timnah, he would never have fallen in love with a girl in Timnah.

So his mistake was, first of all, going into the camp of the enemy, which led to the second problem, falling in love with the girl. There are places where you, as a child of God should never go. If you go to these places, you can just look out, because trouble is on its way, it's gonna follow. You can avoid so many problems if you'll just stay out of the camp of the enemy. That's the best way to avoid the problems. Just don't go to Timnah. Stay away from the camp of the enemy. And there are places in the world today where you, as a child of God have no business going at any time or for any reason; and, if you do go, you're just exposing yourself for further problems and trouble. He went to Timnah. It compounded, he fell in love with a girl in Timnah.

Now, God however, so often takes even our mistakes and turns them around for His purposes. I love the way that God so often turns the tables. You remember Joseph's brothers who sold him to the slave traders that were going to Egypt. And later on when Joseph faced his brothers, he said, "Hey guys! Don't trouble yourself for what you did. I know you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." And it's so gracious that God will even, many times, take those things that we do wrong, but yet He'll turn them around and use them for His purposes. He even causes the wrath of man to praise Him.

And so, the parents did not know that the Lord was seeking an occasion against the Philistines for at that time, they had dominion over Israel. (14:4)

Remember Samson was going to begin, not to completely deliver, he was going to begin the deliverance from the Philistines.

Then Samson went down, and his father and his mother, to Timnah. And as they came to the vineyards of Timnah, and it's a great growing area through there. Behold, the young lion roared against Samson and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him and he tore that lion as you would have torn a little goat and he had nothing in his hands no knife, or sword, or whatever and he didn't tell his father or his mother what he had done. I mean he just you know, tossed it over the carcass over the vineyard and bushes and didn't even tell his folks what happened! So he went down and talked with the woman and he was very much in love with her. Now, after a time, he returned the time of the wedding, to take her as his bride, and he decided to go in and take a look at the carcass of the lion. And behold there was a swarm of bees and there was honey in the carcass of the lion. And he took the honey in his hands and he went on the path eating it and he came to his father and mother and gave it to them and they did eat it, but he didn't tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion. (14:5-8)

Now, Samson is supposed to be a Nazarite, but one of the things about a Nazarite, as you go back to number six, is he could not, a Nazarite could not touch a dead carcass. Even if it were his own parents, he was not to touch a dead body. And here he is taking honey out of this carcass of the lion. And he must have been quite a guy, you know, just take his hand in and get a handful of honey and licking it off his fingers, gives to his parents, and lets them take a few licks and, but he's a, he's a tight mouthed kind of guy. You know, he didn't tell them about killing the lion in the first place. If you were, you know, jumped by a lion and your parents were with you and you know, but they had gone ahead on the path or were on another path and that you were jumped by a lion. What's the first thing you'd tell them when you came to them? Man! I just got jumped by a lion, you know. The guy, very, very closed mouth. So when he gives them the honey he doesn't tell them, hey I got this out of the carcass. No he didn't. He just gives them the honey.

So his father went down to the woman and Samson made there a feast. For so the young men used to do. A big wedding feast, seven day wedding feast. And it came to pass that when they saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him, and so these young guys were sort of hired to spend the week with him. To be his companions during the time of celebrating and all as you're getting ready for the big wedding. And Samson's parents evidently were of, of means, to have that many young men attending him during this week. So Samson said unto these thirty fellows, "I'm going put forth a riddle unto you. If you can declare it me within the seven days of the feast and find it out, then I will give you thirty shirts, which are, were really thirty undershirts, worn next to the body and thirty changes of garments, which were the outer robes that they wore. But if you can't declare to me the riddle, then you have to give me thirty shirts and thirty changes

of garments. They said to him, "You're on man! What's your riddle?" And so he said to them, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong, came forth sweetness". And for three days, they tried to figure this thing out. And it came to pass that on the seventh day they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband that he may declare unto us the riddle, or else we are going to burn you and your father's house with fire." (14:10-15)

Because you've set us up and we don't appreciate it!" You know, you just set us up! You made suckers out of us asking us to be this guy's companions, you know. And it's a big set up, and we don't like this; and, unless you find out what this riddle is, we are going to burn your old man's house and burn you with it. Tough guys!

And Samson's wife wept before him and said, "You hate me! You don't love me! You put forth a riddle to these fellows and you haven't told me what it is!" And he said, "Hey! I haven't even told my parents woman!" (14:16)

Now, she probably, even before these guys came, was trying to figure out the riddle or trying to get him to tell her. You know, the minute he propounded the riddle she tried to, What is it! What is it?, and then he just, Oh you'll find out, Come on tell me what it is!, Oh you don't love me, you know, and I'm gonna have to marry you, You beast, you know, You won't even tell me the riddle. You hate me! And for seven days she's crying. Every time he looks over, you know, she's sniveling. She gives him a dirty scowl, you don't love me.

And it came to pass that on the seventh day, that he told her. Because she was really pressing him. And so she told the riddle to the children of the Philistines. And the men of the city said to him, on the seventh day, before the sun went down, what is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion? And he said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you'd have never found out." (14:16-18)

Now that's not a very kind way to speak of a wife, is it? Been plowing my heifer. He was upset. He realized that she had told.

So the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he went down to Ashkelon, one of the coastal cities and there he got hold of thirty Philistines, who he killed, took their shirts and their garments. (14:19)

And came back and paid off his bet to the guys who had expounded his riddle. And he was angry. He just went home, without even saying hi to his wife. So, her dad gave her to the best man. His companion who he had as his best man.

Chapter 15

And it came to pass that a while after, that during the time of the wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a little goat. He cooled down, decided well, you know, go back and see her. And so he started to go into her bedroom, into her chamber, but her father would not allow him to go in. Her father said, "Hey, when you left here you were so mad, I figured we would never see you again. So I let her marry the best man. But look at her little sister over there. Hey, she's prettier than she was anyway. Hey, why don't you take the little sister for your wife. And Samson said, "I'm going to be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure." In other words, I'm going to get even. And I'm going to do them a displeasure, I'm going to get even with them. And Samson went out and caught 300 foxes or actually jackals and he took fire brands, turned them tail to tail, tied their tails together and he put the fire brand in the midst of them between the two tails. And so, he then turned them loose in the fields of standing wheat. And the, Philistines, of the Philistines, he burnt both the shocks, the wheat had already been gathered and bundled into shocks, as well as the standing corn, with the vineyards and the olives. And the Philistines said, "Who did this?" And they answered, "It was Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite. Because he has, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his best man." And so the Philistines came up and burnt her and her father with fire. And Samson said to them, "Though you have done this, yet I'm gonna get even with you and after that I'll stop." And so he went out and smoked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter. He went out

and just wiped out a bunch of them. And then he went down and dwelled in the top of the rock Etam. And the Philistines went up and pitched in Judah and spread themselves in Lehi. And the men of Judah said, "Hey! Why are you guys come up against us?" And they said, "To bind Samson, and to get even with him, do to him as he's done to us." And so 3,000 men of Judah came to the top of the rock Etam and they said to Samson, "Don't you know that these Philistines are rulers over us? What have you done to us man?" And he said unto them, "Look, I only did to them, what they did to me." And they said unto him, "Look, we're come to bind you that we may deliver you to the hand of the Philistines." And Samson said unto them, "Swear to me that you'll not fall upon me yourselves." And they said, "No, we won't fall upon you, but we want to bind you fast and deliver you into their hand, but we will not kill you." And so they bound him with two new ropes, and they brought him up from the rock. And when he came to Lehi, where the Philistines were in camp, they shouted against him. They cried out and they began to run for him, and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him. The cords that bound his arms became like flax that were burned in the fire. His bands were loosed from off of his hands and he found a new jawbone of a donkey, and he put forth his hand, took it and he slew a thousand men with it. And Samson said, "With a jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, (referring to these piles of bodies around him). "Heaps upon heaps with the jaw of a donkey, I've killed a thousand men!" And it came to pass when he had made an end to speaking, that he tossed the jawbone aside and he called the place Ramath-lehi which literally means uh, well, the Hill of the Jawbone, or Jawbone Heights. Uh, so, it might be a neighborhood you might be interested in looking in, Jawbone Heights. And he was very thirsty and he called on the Lord and he said, "You have given me a great deliverance unto your servant, and now am I going to die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" But God clave a hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water out of it and when he had drunk, his spirit came again and he revived. And so he called the name of the place, "The Well of Him that Cried". Uh, I cried unto the Lord, and God provided the water. So, The Well of Him that Cried, which is in Lehi, unto this day. And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines for twenty years. (15:1-20)

Chapter 16

Then Samson went to Gaza, one of the Philistine cities. He saw there a harlot. He went in unto her. And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither and so they encircled him in and they laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all night saying, "In the morning, when it's day, we're gonna to kill him." And Samson was there until midnight, and he arose at midnight, came to the gates, found them locked and barred, so he took the doors of the gate of the city, the two posts, and he went away with them, bar and all, put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the hill, that is before Hebron. Hebron is about eleven miles away from uh, this area of Gaza, and so he carried the uh, on up to the top of the hill where you could get a view of Hebron, and dumped the gates uh, of the city. It came to pass afterward that he loved a woman who was in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. The lords and the Philistines came up to her and said unto her, "Entice him and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we might bind him and afflict him, and we will give you, every one of us, 1,100 pieces of silver." So there were five lords of the Philistines, and so she has really 5,500 pieces of silver promised to her if she can find out the secret of his strength, and how he might be bound. So Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me I pray thee, wherein your great strength lies. How you might be bound to be afflicted." Samson said unto her, "If they would bind me with seven green whips that were never dried, (now the whip was actually a bow string) and they would use these uh vines for bow strings, but they would dry them and use them for the bow strings. He said that if they would tie me with green bow strings, that had not been dried, then I would be weak like any other man. Then the lords of the Philistines brought to her seven green whips, which had not been dried. and she bound him with them. And there were certain men lying in wait, who were abiding in the chamber, and she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you Samson." And he broke the whips as a thread of tow is broken when it touches the fire, and so his strength was not known.

Delilah said unto him, "Samson, you've mocked me, haven't you? Told me lies. Tell me I pray thee, where might you be bound?" And he said unto her, "If they bind me fast with new ropes that were never

used, then I shall be weak as another man.” Delilah therefore took new ropes and bound him with them, and said unto him, “The Philistines are upon you Samson.” And there were men lying in wait abiding in the chamber and he broke them from off his arms, like a thread. And Delilah said unto Samson, “You’ve mocked me and told me lies. Tell me wherewith you might be bound. And he said unto her, “If you would weave the seven locks of my head with the web in the loom.” And so she fastened it with the pin, that is, the shuttle, and she said to him, “The Philistines are upon you Samson.” And he awakened out of his sleep and went away with the pin of the beam and with the web, (the whole loom). And she said unto him, “How can you say you love me, when your heart is not really with me, you’ve mocked me these three times. You have not told me wherein your great strength lies.” And it came to pass when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him so that his soul was vexed nearly to death. He told her all of his heart. He said unto her, “There is not come a razor upon my head, for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will go from me. I will be weak like any other man. (16:1-17)

I see here, several things. First of all I, I see something that’s almost disgusting. I see a man who has given leave of good judgement, of his senses. Surely Samson should be able to figure out that Delilah is not the gal for him! I mean every time he tells her something, as soon as he goes to sleep, he finds himself wakened and here are the green whips around him, you know. He wakes up and he’s tied with new ropes. He wakes up and the seven locks of his hair are woven into the loom. I mean, surely you would be able to see that this gal is out to get you, to destroy you! And it seems that any man with any sense of judgement at all, would realize that this is not the place for him, this is not the gal for him.

It’s amazing how when a man gets caught up with the passions and the lusts of his flesh, loses all sense of value. Some little, pretty thing, down at the office, can turn his head and the value of the family, the home, his loving wife, his glorious children, just all set aside! He loses all sense of value. He gets carried away by his own passions! He begins to think, I never did love my wife. It was a mistake. We shouldn’t have got married in the first place, you know. And the little kids come running up and they hug him and you know, daddy daddy and, but soon he’s not coming home. Spending time with this gal, making his lame excuses. He’s lost all sense of value. His judgement is gone and he gets carried away and he gets caught up. Oh the tremendous power of a man’s flesh and how it’s able to distort his whole value system. Such was Samson. His sense of judgement was completely gone. He couldn’t see what was just so very, very obvious and should’ve been recognized quite easily, but he just couldn’t see it.

The second thing I see is this business of sort of flirting around when she is seeking the secret of his strength. Playing games. If they would bind me with new bow strings, you know. Goodie goodie Samson, you didn’t tell. You know, good sport. Well, you’re compromising Samson. You’re playing games. And there are people that play games with God and there are people that play games with, with their friends.

So many times when we have had a great spiritual experience, God has moved close to us. And with the presence of God, we’re able to see our lives and we’re able to make good valuations and judgements and evaluations of things. We realize, hey, I’ve got to cut out that partying. I’ve got to cut out that, you know, these friends. They’re not good for me they’re, they’re tearing me down. I’ve got to get a new set of friends. Maybe you’ve been off to a retreat. You’ve had a chance to really stand back and become more objective with life. You’re, you’re away from all of the pressures and, and suddenly God begins to speak to you and you begin to really see life with a clearer perspective.

You make your determination, you know, I’m gonna serve the Lord, I’m gonna follow the Lord. No more of this messing around for me. And you come back home, determined to follow the Lord. The phone rings, hey what are you doing tonight? We’re gonna have a party. Got a keg man! Come on over! Uh, well uh, mmm uh, I, I’ve got sort of a headache I, I don’t think I can make it. Thanks for calling me though, no I appreciate you calling but, I just don’t feel up to it tonight, you know, I just have sort of a headache. Watch out! You’re playing games. Bind me with green bow strings, you see. Bind me with new ropes. You’re playing games. What you’re doing is leaving the door open for future temptation. When you get that call what you should say is you know, something like that would’ve really turned me on a week or so ago, but I made a decision to really follow Jesus Christ and to commit my life to Him and no more parties for me. No more drugs. I’m going to just live full-on for Jesus Christ. What you do is you close the door for future

invitations. There won't be any more temptation. They won't call you again. You see the danger of leaving the door open is that they might call you again in a weak moment, when Satan's really been hassling you, and you might pour out you see, the whole issue. Satan will catch you in his snare. The psalmist said, "By a whorish woman a man is brought to a crust of bread." He poured out his heart. "I've been a Nazarite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, my strength will go. I'll be weak. Delilah, very perceptive person, when Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines. She said, "Come up, for he has showed me all of his heart." And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and they brought their money in their hand. I've got it. And so she made him sleep on her knees and she called for a man and caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and, she began to afflict him, she began to push him around, and his strength was gone. And she said, "The Philistines are upon thee Samson!" and he awoke out of his sleep and he said, "I will go out as at other times before and shake myself", and he knew not that the Lord had departed from him.

It's possible for you as you're playing around with the world, as you're playing around with sin, it's possible for you to get to the place where the Spirit of God has really departed from you and you don't even know it. You're living in sort of a deception. "Hey, I can quit anytime! I can wipe these guys out anytime! You know, I'll go out as I did before." But you've gone too far. There's no strength left, there's no reserve.

It's possible for the Lord to depart from a person, and they not even know it. Because you've been going on with the motions. But the emotion has long gone. The Philistines took him and they put out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza, and they bound him with fetters of brass. Brass in the scriptures, always a metal that signifies judgement, and he did grind in the prison house. They gave him the most menial of all tasks, the task that was given to the lowest slave. That of pushing the big post around in the circle where the millstone would roll around the circle, grinding the grain into flour. And he did grind.

And again the picture of what sin does to a man. First of all it blinds a person. Paul said the god of this world is blinded their eyes that they cannot see the truth. A person that is being caught up in sin is blind to his true condition. He thinks that everything is okay. He thinks that he's got it made. He thinks he's on top of things. He thinks he's in control, but he's not. He's blind to the reality of what Satan is doing. His life is being destroyed, but he can't see it. You've been around the outside. You can see it. You can see that the guy he just isn't performing anymore. You can see his uh, level of proficiency going down but he can't see it himself. He's, he's blind to the fact. Hey man, I'm so good you know, I can do my job I you know, it's not bothering me you know, and especially a person I don't know if you've been around alcoholics, a person that's entering into the alcoholic state, how for so long their blind to what's happening. "I can quit anytime I want." They're blind.

But one day you wake up and find that you're bound. Becomes a realization I can't quit. It's got a hold on me. You begin to panic because you try to stop and you begin to feel the signs of withdrawals and all and you think Ooh, I never intended it to go this far. And sin gets a hold on your life and you get caught in the trap and you can't get out, you struggle. But sin has such a hold upon you now, you just can't free yourself. And that's when it turns into a grind. It no longer gives you the pleasure, no longer gives you the excitement, but you're still in the world and you can't get out of it and it's a grind, it's miserable. It's a life becomes a grind and we even hear that as a terminology. Life is a grind, becomes monotonous, as sin begins to grind away at your life.

Howbeit, verse 22, "the hair on his head began to grow again after he was shaven". Do not make the mistake of thinking that his strength lay in his long hair. His strength lay in his commitment to God, of which the long hair was a sign. Many times make the mistake of reading the story very shallowly and saying, well, you know, his hair was his strength. Not so, his strength was his commitment to God. The Nazarite vow, a vow of commitment to God. That was the secret of his strength. And when his hair was shaved it was the sign of a broken vow, a broken covenant with God. A broken commitment. And a man who breaks his covenant with God becomes weak like any other man. You become a victim of the enemies powers. But God's grace, so great, the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

The lords of the Philistines had gathered together to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon. (16:23)

Dagon was sort of a, well he was the fish god, but he was represented. In his representations he looked

sort of like a mermaid, only he had a male face instead of the female face, long tresses and so forth, uh Dagon was represented by a male face and upper torso with a uh, tail and all of a fish. The god of the Philistines. And so they were going to worship Dagon and rejoice, because they said our god Dagon, has delivered Samson, our enemy into our hands. So it's a big celebration to their god for bringing Samson into this pitiful condition, captured by the enemy. And when the people saw him, they praised their god.

They probably came to David after his experience with Bathsheba and as he was laying unto David, the enormity of his crime, he added these words, and you have caused the enemies of God to blaspheme. That's always one of the sad byproducts of the Christian falling. The enemies of God are always saying, aha, and they're supposed to be Christians, but look at that, you know, and you cause the enemies of God to blaspheme. Here, Samson caused the enemies of God really to blaspheme and he caused them to praise their god Dagon.

Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us. So it came to pass when their hearts were merry, that someone said, "Hey, let's call for Samson, that he may make us sport." And so they called for Samson out of the prison house and he made them sport. And they set him between the pillars and Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, allow me to feel the pillars whereupon the house stands that I might lean on them. It could be in making sport, that he was dancing for them. It could be that it was just his presence was just the cause of a lot of jeers, a lot of heckling, a lot of laughter, a lot of scorn, screaming and excitement. Pushing him around, tripping him, watching him stumble, watching him trying to find his way around with no eyes in a strange place and just the sight of this man who had been such a terror to them, in that pitiful, weakened condition, was just great sport for them and the laughing and the jeering. So Samson said to the little boy, "Leave me to the two pillars that holds this place up." The house was full of men and women and all of the lords of the Philistines were there and there were about 3,000 of the men and the women there in the arena, and they were watching as Samson made sport; and, Samson called unto the Lord, and said, "Oh Lord God, remember me, I pray thee and strengthen me I pray thee, only this once, oh God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes God." God, once more, once more let me have your power. Let me feel your power God. Once more Lord, just one more time, that I can get even with these guys because of my eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars, upon which the house stood and upon which it was held up. One with his right hand, and the other with his left. And Samson prayed, "Let me die with the Philistines." And he bound himself with all his might and the house fell upon the lords and upon all of the people that were there, so that the dead which he slew at his death, were more than they which he slew in his life, and his brothers, those of the house of his father, came down and they took his body and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the burying place of Manoah his father, and he judged Israel for twenty years. (16:24-31)

The sad and tragic story of a man who had tremendous potential. A man who could've been one of the greatest powers for God in the history of the nation. A man who had been endowed by God. A man who had the Spirit of God. A man who had tremendous strength. A man who is a nemesis to the enemies of God and should have been in the records, one of the greatest heroes of God's people in delivering the people of God from their enemies. But instead, the tragic story of a wasted life, of wasted potential.

You say that story is old? I say it's new. You say it happened 3,000 years ago, I'll tell you it's happening today. I look around and I see young people, marvelously talented by God, endowed by God, special gifts and abilities, and I see them beginning to mess around with drugs, with alcohol, with sex and I see them destroying their lives, wasting their potentials, and my heart aches for the wasted potential. What they could've been for God. What they should be for God, but to see them just with the wasted lives, and I think, oh the tragedy of the waste.

Back in the early 70's, when God was using the church to reach so many hippies, kids that had been messing around with the hallucinogenic drugs, and with marijuana, which was so widespread in our area at that time. The LSD, and the whole thing,

Timothy Leary was in Laguna Beach during the height of that whole movement in this area where God used the church to impact so many young people, so many high schools. We were seeing a marvelous work

of God, tremendous revival. But we were concerned with Laguna Beach High School, it was the one high school that we hadn't been able to impact or reach. The Chief of Police in Laguna said that they estimated that 95% of the kids in high school, at that particular time, were using drugs, and they actually had to just sort of quit classes for awhile because the kids were so stoned. They couldn't do their lessons. It was a tragic pitiful state and we were praying, "God help us, help us Lord to reach Laguna High." God had blessed at Marina High, at Edison High, at Newport at Costa Mesa. We had seen marvelous moves of God on the other high school campuses, Huntington Beach, but we hadn't seen anything in Laguna. We were praying, "Oh God, help us to crack Laguna. God, help us to get into Laguna High."

A lady called me up and she said, "Chuck, my daughter is over in Orange County Hospital, in the mental ward. Would you go over and see her? She had a bad acid trip, and she freaked out, and she's in the mental ward over there, and I'd like you to go over and talk to her." And so, I went over to Orange County Hospital, the mental ward, rang the bell, the nurse came, unlocked the door, let me in, I introduced myself, told her the young girl that I wanted to see. She led me down the hall and into a padded cell and there, sitting on the bed, was a very pretty young girl. A very sweet and lovely face. She was a homecoming queen at Laguna High School. She was a cheerleader. I said, "Hi, are you, (and I called her by her name)", and she says, "Yeah, are you Chuck?" and I says yeah. She said, "Well, my mom told me you were gonna come and see me, I appreciate your coming." And so I started to talk to her about the Lord. I talked to her about what God was doing here at Calvary Chapel, about the work of God among so many young people, how their lives are being changed and transformed by their commitment of their lives to Jesus Christ. And she seemed to be very interested in the things I was sharing. She asked questions, I answered them and finally I asked her, "Would you like to receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord, turn your life over to Him?" And she gave me the sweetest smile, and she said, "No."

You see while I was talking with her, I thought, I was thinking, in my mind, Lord, you're great! This is the answer! We've been wanting to bust Laguna High for a long time and this is the key. Lord this gal is popular, homecoming queen, she's a pretty young girl, if she'll just really commit her life and get turned onto you Lord, we'll be able to reach those poor kids in Laguna High. And I really was, I really thought, ah God you've, you've answered our prayers, this is the answer to our prayers, and when she said no, I was really taken back. I was shocked, I just was sort of stunned, I just, my mouth dropped open and I said well, you, you sure?, and I went on and talked to her a little bit more and I said, "Wouldn't you like to just surrender your life to Jesus?" She said, "No." She said, "I appreciate you coming Chuck, and talking to me and what you say makes sense, and I appreciate your concern for me, and, and I want to thank you for coming and talking and it, it, I, and I've enjoyed it. But, she said, what I did the other night was very, very stupid. I know better now. I would never take drugs again and I don't need the Lord, I've learned my lesson."

I left, drove home, with a heavy heart. I thought, oh Lord, what she could've been, an instrument that you could've used to turn things around down there in Laguna, oh Lord, why, why? But I realize everybody is a free moral agent. God won't force anybody to accept Him. But I thought Lord did I not say the right thing, could I have said something Lord that would've changed? Lord, why?

Just a few years ago, I got a call again from the same mother. She said, "Chuck, would you mind talking to my daughter again? I think maybe you could help her." I said, "Oh, I'd be glad to talk to her." I figured she's probably about twenty-six years old now, figuring the time that I saw her, she was seventeen. And I made an appointment, the secretary rung me and said, you know, your appointment is here, I went out and I saw her mother and said hi and sitting next to her mother, was this girl that immediately I could recognize as not having her full mental capacities. Mouth was open, her tongue was out and there was that dullness in her eyes that told you that she wasn't all there and her mother said, "Chuck, you remember," and she called her name, and I couldn't believe it. She had, well, she was way overweight, she weighed up to probably 250 pounds. Her face was blotched, her hair was unkept, and just this, this, face this look, that you could see. I tried not to look shocked, I'm sure I wasn't totally successful, but I invited her to come into the office. Her mother had to help her to her feet and her mother had to help her into the office; and I sat her down in the chair, and I began to talk to her; and, I said well, how are you? It's been a long time since I've seen you."

“I’m fine thank you.” “Well, where are you living now?” “I live over in a home and it’s very nice, and they treat me very nice.”

Oh man, my heart was just being ripped right out of me. I thought God, she ought to be a young wife now. She ought to be having beautiful children. She ought to be just in the bloom and the glow of life and look at her! She’s destroyed! My heart was ripped, and I thought, oh God, it’s Samson all over again. What she could’ve been, what she could’ve been for you as far as an influence. How you could’ve used her, but look at her, look at this destroyed life, that blew her mind with the drugs. She’s still in a care home. No hope for her future. Her life will be spent sitting in a rocking chair, watching the traffic go by. She has learned to knit.

Tragic. The wasted potential is always tragic. You think you don’t need God, you think you can get by. You think that you can play around with fire and not get burned. You think you can improve on God’s plan for your life. You think you can mess around in the camp of the enemy and you can always, you know, come out whenever you want, not so. Not so. You can be wasting your life away, the wasted potential and never be what God intended you to be. Never do what God intended you to do. May God help us that we are not modern-day Samsons but, may God help us to make our commitment to Jesus Christ, and to keep our commitment to Him, until our dying day.

Shall we pray?

Father, we look around tonight and we see tremendous potential. People who have been marvelously gifted by you. People with talents and capacities that we can only admire as we see how you have gifted them, but Lord we also see people that are wasting their talents, people that are wasting their lives. People who are being caught up by their flesh, caught in the web and are not achieving and obtaining their full potential in Christ Jesus. Oh Lord, help us to lay aside every weight and sin which does so easily beset us. That we might run, with patience, the race that is set before us, as we look unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. God help us to make our commitment. To make it firm, to make it complete, to make it lasting. In Jesus’ name, Amen.