

**"The Fruit of Revenge" – Judges 15:1-20**

Tonight we want to take a look at Judges 15, as we are marching through. Samson has become kind of an interesting character (more than ever before), because I've always looked at Samson being used by God, and though he was, and don't misunderstand me, but over his life was a wasted life. He was called by God to do a tremendous work for God. He was ordained to do something very, very special, and God prepared him in a unique way.

You remember that Manoah, his father and mother, was visited by the angel of the Lord at Theophanies (Judges 13:21), none other than the Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. And we see that He came to Gideon the very same way; but He said that they're going to bear a son, and he's, once again going to be a Nazarite. And she must do the vow of the Nazarite herself, and so she could not drink wine, she could not touch anything that was dead. And once again, that she could not cut her hair, so she was in this vow, she was a part of this whole thing, she sanctified her life until this child came.

Samson was raised in a wonderful way, in a home taught by the things of God. And so we saw that, but then in chapter 14, we see him at the age of 20, the very first thing he did: he went down to Timnath, and so we mentioned all last week that six different times he went down, and it says over and over again in chapter 14 that he's "going down". He went down to this woman, he went down

to the vineyard, and he went down again to the lion. And we found that he was not to be around the vineyard, he was not to be around anything that was dead, and he was violating everything that God established within his life. And the thing that really bothered me more than anything before in these chapter, in chapter 14 (two things really), I could not get out of my mind even unto this evening. One is that, not only did he mess around in the vineyard (hard for me to believe he was there flirting with God), but after the Lord sent the lion to try to get him out, and he ripped the lion apart. You remember that he went back a second time (and this is what breaks my heart), he went back the second time and then he took his hand and reached inside the dead carcass. And so not only was he drawn by sin, and absolutely pulled into sin, but then he reaches his hand into the very thing God said, "Don't touch."

And then secondly, the thing that breaks my heart and really sad is, he begins to make a riddle and we always thought that riddle was kind of neat and clever. But here's the thing that really spoke to my heart. Number one, he is making a riddle and mocking the very sin that he was involved in. So in a sense, he was mocking God because he wasn't taking it serious before the Lord. And I think that we do that sometimes, that we know and hear God telling us not to go down a road. And then we go down that road and we get ourselves caught, and then we begin to get angry at God. And I think that we really ought to just simply to confess and repent and go on with our life, but there's a tendency that Satan wants to bring us back to the very thing that God delivered you. And just to remind you that it was Abraham, Moses I should say, that his anger was kindled, and remember eighty years later he was, eighty years before he was in Egypt, he killed that one man; he was driven to the wilderness for forty years. Then he was taking the children of Israel into the wilderness for forty years, so that's eighty years, at the very end he came back to the very sin he did. He smote the rock in anger and God had to deal with him. So sometimes the very sin that you fall into, and have a bit a problem with, is often the one thing Satan

locks into and seeks to try to hassle you in different ways throughout your life. The best thing to do is die to yourself and say, "Lord, fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit."

I was reading yesterday about this study and I came upon two interesting newspaper articles and I'll summarize them because they're kind of nifty. One, it happened in Washington (both are true stories), one is about a man that wife cheated on him and went ahead and got a divorce. So he went down, and the next day, drove up in a huge, huge tractor and he had a beautiful eighty-five thousand dollar three story house in Washington and he began to plow it down. And the neighbors came out and they called the police and the police came and they stopped him and he reached in his back pocket and pulled out a demo permit for fourteen dollars and twenty-five cents. And they couldn't stop him, so he completely demolished the house; he was so mad at his wife. Now here's the interesting thing: he was right but he was wrong. He was right in the fact that he had a permit. So, you guys, I don't want you to think that way. He had a permit, he did his homework. That house is coming down one way or the other. And sometimes, that's a little bit like Samson: he was right, but he was wrong. He's right in doing what he's doing but he's wrong because he put himself in a situation and now he's fighting out of that situation.

And the second story was about three hundred whales that beached themselves and they were trying to find out what happened. And they found out that they felt like they were chasing sardines and they were moving, and these sardines were pretty crafty; they went into the low tide and then they made a right hand turn and all these whales got beached. And that's exactly what happened with Samson. This great, big old guy chasing these Philistine women all over the place, and he got beached, and he is no longer being used by God. And sometimes, in the strength that we have, in the bigness that we are, we waste our life chasing these little, little, tiny things and all of a sudden we get beached,

and we lose the most important thing of what God called us to do. And so kind of interesting, tonight we're going to look at really Samson, and the fruit of revenge. The really, the fruit of revenge in chapter 15. And once again, revenge will never solve anything.

In verse 2, I just want to read this and we're going to read a couple things and then we're going to dive into this chapter, but I kind of want to preference a little bit of a longer introduction to kind of understand where we're going to go, because I believe, oftentimes, we seek to get even or have revenge. It says in verse 2 (to kind of give you the story all the way down to verse 10), he said that he was now coming back to see his wife, but his father, the father's daughter, went ahead and gave his daughter to another man. So the father no doubt seeking revenge upon Samson for all the problems he's caused. Well now, all of a sudden, because Samson has been rebuffed or is not able to take his wife, he now is going to react, and so he does react and we see that, and we'll get to that in just, in verse 5, where he goes out and he begins to burn all the crops. He catches three hundred jackals or foxes (we're not sure which one), ties their tails together, sticks a torch in them and sets them loose and he burns and torches all the fields. So when that happened, all of a sudden the Philistines come back and they say, "You torch our field, we're going to burn your wife!" And so they went ahead, and they burnt the wife and they also burnt her father, and so they got toast and it was a sad situation, so the Philistines got even. So when all of a sudden Samson found out what happened, he got really mad and so he went out and all of a sudden he found some guys and he knocked them over the head and killed them. And so he was really upset. So then the Philistines found out. They came all the way to Judah and they said to Judah, "Where is this guy? We want to get him." And Judah said, "What did he do?" And they said, "Well, he's causing havoc with us." "He's up here." And so all of a sudden, Samson goes with Judah; and then you remember the story, his hands are loose, he picks up a jawbone of a donkey and whacks a thousand men, and

that's not the end of the story. In chapter sixteen they pop out his eyes and then he finally pulls down the pillars. Now why am I telling you this? Very simply: (if you don't understand the danger of revenge) revenge is something that will never be even. In other words, it's Israel, Arabs, Arabs, Israel, Israel Arabs. Who started it? Who's going to end it? There's no stopping it. And when it stops, this treadmill you're not going to start.

Notice, if you would in verse 3, **"And Samson said concerning them, 'now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure, I do them.'" I'm going to do them under.** Then notice in verse 6, **"The Philistine says, 'who has done this?'"** The question. **"And they answered Samson, the son of law of the Timnath because he has taken his wife and given her to his company and the Philistines came up and burnt her and the father with fire."**

Then notice verse 7, **"And Samson said unto them, 'though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you.'" And two others in ten, "And the men of Judah said, 'why are ye come up against us?' And he answered, 'to bind Samson are we come up to do to him' (check this out) as he has done to us"**. And then in verse 11, at the very end it says, **"And Samson said, unto them," 'as they did unto me, so I have done unto them.'" In other words, this thing is out of control, totally out of control. And it happens in a church, it happens in a marriage, it happens in a single life, where you go back and forth and back and forth, it gets deeper and deeper and God is looking. Now listen, God is looking to bless someone who is willing to die to himself, and what that person says, "I'm willing to stop this thing and die," I guarantee you God is going to bless that one who stops it, because he's in the very will of God.**

So I want to encourage you tonight, by faith; I want you to have faith in God. Vengeance belongs to God – you stop it in the name of the Lord! You die to

who you are. You let God fight your battles. You believe that God is able to vindicate and justify and sanctify your life. You remember it says in Psalms, in a very powerful way in Psalm 94, verse 1, **"Oh Lord, God to whom vengeance belongeth, Oh God to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself."** In other words, God repay them for their works. And then Paul said in Romans, in 12:19, **"dearly beloved, avenge not yourself but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written 'Vengeance is mine; I will repayeth, sayeth the Lord. Therefore, if thy enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him a drink'"** (not strychnine, give him a drink). **"For in doing so, thou shall heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome with evil"** (I've got to get even).

Now why did Jesus say, **"If someone slaps you, turn your cheek"** (Matthew 5:39), because the issue, or another time He said, **"If they pluck out an eye, just pluck out one eye."** (Matthew 5:29). In other words, our tendency, "you pluck out my eye, I'm going to pop both of your eyes out. You hit me in the face, I'm going to knock your teeth out, and knock your legs out and break your leg." In other words, our flesh wants to get even plus we want to teach them a lesson, every one of you. Now, I know you think you have a wonderful heart, but you don't. The bible says you have a wicked heart, and it's perverse. And if someone hurts you, if some girl breaks up with you, you're going to make her life miserable. And all of a sudden you realize the capacity to do that. So, that's the story. Very simply, James (one last verse we're going to dive in), in James 4, verse 1, **"From whence come wars and fightings among you."** I've been watching the civil war thing where six hundred and twenty thousand Americans died. Not fifty seven thousand like in Vietnam, six hundred and twenty thousand men died between the South and North, the Confederate and the Union. It says, **"These wars and fightings among you come they not hence even from your own lust, that war in your members, ye lust and have not, ye kill and desire to have, ye cannot obtain, ye fight in war yet ye have not**

**because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not because you ask amiss that ye may consume it upon your own lust.”** And James is saying, that when we fight and when we war and when we want to get even, we are lusting and grieving the Holy Spirit. We need to stop it.

So, it is a very dangerous thing to get into gossip. When I begin to talk or defame somebody, the bible says I begin to mess with their witness and I begin to call them a false witness; it's a dangerous thing. Six things the Lord hates. One, is he that causes dissension among the brethren – who divides the brethren – it's an abomination to God (Proverbs 6:16). So I need to build, I need to lift up. Samson wasted his life. And I think it's a ploy of Satan. That you will spend your life, trying to figure out what you did wrong because things didn't work out, or you will spend your life trying to get even, or you will spend your life down in the dumps because you did something that's all emotion. God desires that you would be set free, serve him and wonderfully see the victory that God is, and Satan is going to get you on this emotional rollercoaster, and that's what he did in this chapter. Samson was no good to God because he was emotionally out in Never Ever Land chasing all these women. So in verses 1-8, we find Samson's revenge.

Kind of a tragic story, in verse 1 and 2, **“but it came to pass within a while after”** (now what that means is he cooled off if you were not here last week).” He was going down to Timnath, he saw a woman that he liked (we named the study “Lust at First Sight”), he wanted her, he had no business being down in the Philistine camp, he was an Israelite, he was to judge the nation of Israel, he was flirty. It would be like seeing your pastors or myself going down to Las Vegas, not to minister but to gamble. All of sudden I'm down, “What are you doing inside here?” “Well I don't know, just thought I'd be down here trying to pay for the car note, I don't know.” You know, dangerous, dangerous, you know I'd come up with something. But I have no business being there. And then all

of a sudden we see that after he was there, he made his mom and dad get together and put this wedding together. And then you remember, he did a riddle, he went out and killed thirty of the Philistines, at the wedding he went crazy, he got angry, he took off – he cooled off. Now he’s coming back but everything’s changed.

In that moment of anger, when he split, dad said, “she’s not going to marry him.” And so he gave her to another man. He’s coming back because in the law here, they were really married even though they hadn’t had sex, they were still married. The only way they could get out of this seven day cycle is they had to divorce. So in his mind, he’s still married to this gal. He’s coming back, and he’s cooled off, he’s ready to put things back together. **“And the wheat harvest** (so it’d be June), **“and that Samson visited his wife with a kid.”** So you bring flowers to your girlfriends, you bring candy, he brought a kid. So they’re going to sacrifice this kid and they’re going to kind of put this thing back together and try to make this romantic thing work. And he said, “I will go into my wife and into the chambers, I’m going to go have a relationship with her physically, I’m going to seal this marriage, we’re going to get on with our life.” **“But** (the conjunction) **her father would not suffer him to go in.”** In other words, he was not going to let him go in because he was already, she was already with another man in that time of chambers. And her father said, **“I barely thought that thou hadst utterly hated her.”**

You could kind of see why. You remember in his anger, he says, **“you messed with my heifer”** (Judges 14:18). I think that would pretty much tell the dad you didn’t think much of his daughter, you know call her a heifer. And it says that, I didn’t make that up, it says right there in the bible, chapter fourteen. You would not have known that riddle if you didn’t mess with my heifer. I would never say that, but that’s what it says. You can look, it’s right there in the bible. But, I imagine dad got an idea that, “Oh, I don’t think he’s too happy right now.”

And so, Samson's anger was cooled off, he came back and dad said, "Hey, I made another decision." You remember Manoah, and his mom paid for everything, set everything up, so it really should have been his wife. It wasn't God's will, he was out of God's will and I think God made sure it didn't happen. If he would have married this woman, that would have been the end of his marriage, or the ministry. And so God, in some ways, was protecting the foolishness of his own decision. And sometimes we are bent on doing something, and God needs to intervene so we don't make a mistake within our life. So Samson, once again is in trouble.

Her father stops, it says here, and he's devastated, and he's thinking (you know, the father), "Hey, my daughter was in tears for seven days." You remember, she laid on his lap crying, "Give me the riddle." And then the father was embarrassed because he went out and killed thirty of his friends, the Philistines. And then his daughter was overwhelmed because he's calling her all kinds of names, so he just says, "You know, I'm going to solve my problem really quick." So Samson is now really angry - really, really angry. And so it says in verse 2, the father said, once again.

And you know it's not the first time that God did some interesting thing with women, with marriage. I think that, think about this for a second: Adam went to bed single; he woke up married. Now that's, that's kind of a bizarre thing in the bible. You go to bed, you're a single guy and you wake up married. I mean, how in the world did that happen? And then you remember Jacob, he went to bed and he woke up with the wrong woman. And I still have a tough time with that one. I...how in the world did that happen? Then I remember Boaz, he went to bed and woke up and Ruth was at his feet. So there are some bizarre things that go on the Bible. But here we find very simply, that no; you're not going to marry my daughter.

And I think the great lesson here (before we move on) is sometimes you invest your life, sometimes you invest your talent, your time, everything, and all of a sudden things go wrong. And he was blindsided; he was hurt; he was devastated. What's going to happen when you do what you think you should do and God decides to go a different way? Are you going to be wise enough to look to God and see what he's doing in your life, but out of anger he now seeks to get even and he's mad, really, really, really mad. And so, taking the vantage or taking vengeance is a horrible thing. And then in verses 3 and 5 we see that he begins to burn the fields. And I, sometimes, my wife watches the animal cop, where these cops arrest these people that abuse animals, and it just cracks me up. And, you know, if they were here they'd have a case right here. This is definitely animal abuse, I mean, no doubt.

**“And Samson said concerning them, now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.”** I'm going to get even. If they would not have messed with my wife-to-be, this would have never happened. And Samson went out and caught three hundred foxes. Now we don't think they're foxes because foxes run by themselves, and Samson would have to chase three hundred of them. Could be, I'm not saying they couldn't. But jackals, you see them in the Hebrews, a little strong, they run in packs. And so he grabbed three hundred of them, he tied their tails together, put a torch in them, lit that torch, and so these poor jackals, one wanted to go this way another one wanted to go this way, and they ran and they torched everything, it's a horrible sight. **“And took firebrands and turned their tails, the tails, and put firebrands in the midst between their tails. And when he had set the brands of fire, he had let them go.”** So, he would have taken one fox and did the tail that no doubt the fox or the jackal would have gone inside the hole that he usually lives in. But by tying both of them together, they couldn't make up their mind which way they were going to go, and it would cause all kinds of confusion. Let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines

and burn up both the stocks and also the standing corn with the vineyards and the olives; he torched everything. I mean, it was a horrible thing.

And he said, "I'm going to do this to you; I'm going to get revenge." Now, revenge is natural. You need to kind of think about this: revenge is natural, forgiveness is supernatural. Jesus, you remember that day, He said, "Peter, how you doing." "Hey," Peter said, "Jesus, I think I got this thing wired. If I forgive seven times seven, that's a good day in my life. Which means I'll forgive you forty-nine times for talking about me." And Jesus said, "That's good, but that's not really what I want." "Well what do you want?" **"I want seven times seventy"** (Matthew 18:21-22)." And Peter said, "You mean four hundred and ninety times in one day? Give me a break!" That's exactly what Christ is trying to do. You see forgiveness is not an action, it's an attitude. And so, my heart: "I want to get even." My heart: "I want to hurt you." Naturally, I'm going to defend myself. To be able to forgive is the work of the Holy Spirit. And so if you're unforgiving, if you're bitter, if you have resentment, if you're talking about people wanting to get even, it's just a sign that the spirit of the living God is not doing the work in your heart, probably because of the sin; and so now your quenching when God wants you to forgive. The bible says, **"If you don't forgive, then God can't forgive you"** (Mark 11:26). Very important to realize that you need to stand pure before God at all times.

I read this little thing about a truck driver, he was in this area, he wanted to get a cup of coffee and have a breakfast, so he pulls the truck up and goes inside and has a wonderful breakfast. I mean eggs and bacon sounds good right now. Cup of coffee, I mean, just great hot sauce, the whole shot. And these three Hell's Angels come in, and start mouthing off, and they see this guy, this truck driver (he's not a big guy – usually truck drivers are a pretty good size and have a little attitude), he was minding his own business. So the Hell's Angels said, "You know, let's go see how we could mess his life up." So they walked up and

took the eggs and threw them in his face. They took the eggs and mashed them up in his beard. And then they took the coffee and they poured it over his head. Then the other Hell's Angel grabbed the toast and ate it. And when they were all done they walked away laughing at him, and he got up and took his visa and paid the bill and walked out and the Hell's Angels began to say, "what a foolish guy, I mean he has no guts whatsoever." And as he was walking out, about ten minutes later this guy walks in and all of a sudden he says, "Man that truck driver is a terrible driver, he just ran over three bikes out there." Well, revenge, revenge, be careful, because you might look like you're forgiving, but boy, when you have the chance, you're going to pop them. When you have the chance, you're going to talk about them. That's not forgiveness. Forgiveness is forgetting. And so, I love that story, and once again, three hundred foxes, as I mentioned, in the fire.

And verse 6, he goes on, **"Then the Philistines said, 'who has done this?'"** And they answered, because they couldn't see, it's a fair question, they couldn't see a man running through. They saw these; they couldn't even see the jackals, all they could see are fires going through. Who did this? **"And they answered, 'Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up and burnt her and her father with fire.'"**

Now, very carefully, remember the story in chapter fourteen. The Philistines said, "If you don't tell us the riddle, we're going to burn you." So out of fear, she broke Samson to get the riddle because she wanted to save her life, her dad's life, and Samson's wife, he got the riddle. Now, they come back and she still gets burnt. All that tells me is that Satan doesn't play fair. He'll play both sides. Speak the truth, don't compromise. When you compromise, you don't tell the truth. She should've told Samson right there what was going on. She held it. Well, at the very end happened. So once again, he killed thirty of them and now

the crops and so they're destroyed, he's betrayed and so he realizes that his own wife has been burnt. And so Satan is seeking. So vengeance and violence breeds violence and Samson burns the crops, they burn the wife. And then in verse 7 and 8, his burning anger, **"And Samson said unto them, 'though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.'"**

Now, Samson had a horrible reputation of getting even. This word avenge, you're going to see it in chapter sixteen, one of the great stories I think in the very end of the book. He says, **"Lord, let me avenge my eyes."** And God said, "No." Samson was so carnal, and so fleshly, all he could think about was himself, "let me get even." But then he said, **"Lord, let me avenge your name."** God said, I like that. You can do that. And God gave him the strength. Lord, don't let me hold on to my reputation. It's your name and your glory, in a very powerful way.

And Samson said, **"Ye have done this, I will be avenge of you, and after that I will cease."** Yeah, right. You're never going to stop. That's a false statement. "I'm going to stop, this is it, no more. One more smoke, that's it, no more." You know, we throw away more packs of cigarettes, "that's it, no more. In the name of Jesus Christ, that's it, throw it away." That night, you come back, hop in your truck go back to the street and find that pack of cigarettes. Grab that puppy right there. I did that so often. "No more – No more Playboy, no more coke, no more lusting after homes." Right! Your flesh loves to lust. Your flesh loves those things. I heard Krispy Kremes is going down, probably because I'm talking about them so much, they went down in stocks today and maybe you need to go buy some, I don't know. But, yeah, yeah! So don't do it no more! I won't. That's it, no more – not going to be mean, I'm going to be nice, not going to gossip...right! You were born to talk, thing is, you need to talk about the Lord. And so here, you fill your heart with the Lord, you're going to talk

about the Lord. You fill your heart with the things of the world, you're going to talk – you talk and what's in your heart? Out of the heart comes the issue of life. So once again, the danger. So, he says, "I'm going to avenge, I'm going to stop." No way. Anger will push you and cause you to do things.

In verse 8, "**he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter.**" Now this is not the thousand, this is another one we have no idea. "**He went down and dwelt in the top of the rock.**" And here, Etam simply means hot ground, it's a city built by Rehoboam for defense and it was a place that God, he was kind of hanging out. And then in verses 9-11, after we see his revenge now we see his defense – he's defending. "**And the Philistine army (verse 9), and the Philistines went up and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi.**" And so, now there pitching in Judah. In other words, they're there, they've come in.

Now this is what's sad: they're not attacking Judah (this is important). They're kind of sitting around pitching in, they're able to co-labor together, co-live together, and in other words, there was nothing in Judah that threatened them. And sometimes that happens in our lives. We go to work, our life doesn't sting anyone. In fact, the saddest testimony is when all of a sudden the guy next to you gets saved, and all of a sudden you tell him you've been a Christian for twenty years, and he's saying, "Why didn't you tell me? I didn't know you were a Christian." That's the saddest testimony. You are to be the salt, and you are to be the light. You are to be a light bulb, and you are to sting people with a witness. Not being an oddball, but your life is to preserve and be different. Here, very simply, we find they're going into Judah, and they're going to hang out, they're on a search and rescue looking for this one man.

Because of that, Judah's army (they kind of threw these guys together in verse 10). "**And the men of Judah said, 'why have you come against us?'**"

They're oblivious to what's going on. **"And they answered, 'to bind Samson we are come up. To do him, as he has done us.'"** In other words, we're going to get this guy and we're going to do him under. **"And three thousand of the men of Judah went to the top of the rock, and said to Samson, 'knowest thou not that the philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou has done unto us?'"** In other words, you have rocked their boat. "Well, yes, they're the enemy." Well, we don't want you rocking our boat; we're going to turn you over. So, number one, they're able to live with the enemy. Number two (very important) they became instruments of the enemy. And sometimes, when I get blown out of the water, and now I'm kind of fooling around with sin, able to kind of hang out, I begin to be used by Satan to do the work he wants me to do, either through gossip or talking or through whatever it might be. Now I've become an instrument in the hands of Satan. God wants me to stay pure. And when I get blown out of the water, I need to come back. And oftentimes, the reason I don't come back is because I'm hurt. Christians are going to hurt you. Judah is hurting Samson. It's not the world that's after you. Oftentimes, it's the Christians that talk about you, it's the Christians that look about you, they make fun of you – this is this tragic thing. It's the civil war among us. We don't have enough sense to go outside and say, "Let's go fight the devil together." We're looking here and looking there, and talking about that person and we're concerned about this clique and that clique and who's being used and I'm jealous and I'm hurt because this guy is being used; instead of being a family. So a family, we rejoice when people are being used, we weep when people are being hurt. We want to build up; we don't want to lose one member. That's not the Christian body. The Christian body is, "hey, you blew it, I'm in, I'm going to take over." Sad.

Judah again, the same thing happened with Nehemiah. You remember and Judah. Nehemiah said, "Can we rebuild these walls?" And Judah said, "There's too much rubbish." I'm glad that, once again, Nehemiah did not listen to Judah.

And by the way, Judah means "praise." So here is the guy that's in charge of the praises kind of discouraged. So Tobiah and Sanballat are saying there's too much rubbish, now inside Judah is saying to Nehemiah there's too much rubbish (Nehemiah 4:7). In other words, outside-inside I need to have a conviction. Nehemiah said, "I can do it myself." And when you say, "I can live this Christian walk – me and Jesus. If everyone else backslides, that's fine. I'm going to stay faithful at any cost." Then things begin to happen. I'm going to turn my cheek; I'm going to learn to die. I'm going to believe that God's going to defend me, and God's going to build my case. So we see here, Judah said, "Why?"

And then verse 11, **"three thousand of the men of Judah went up to the top and said to him, 'what are you doing? What is this that thou has done unto us?' And he said unto them, 'as they did unto me so I have done to thee.'"** You get the point? Over and over. And so the lesson once again: you're going to get hurt. There's going to be obstacles. Your children are going to hurt you. Husbands are going to hurt you. Wives are going to hurt you. Dating relationships are going to hurt you. Leadership is going to hurt you. I'm going to hurt you. Sometimes, people get hurt because I don't say, "Hi." I don't have my hearing aid, and I walk by you. "God, he's rude." Well, yah, you know. I guess I am. But, you know, I didn't hear you. So sometimes we just hurt people. But see, it takes real maturity to say, "Hey, you know, let's go on. Let's do something." So, very simple, three thousand they came together.

And then in verse 12 and 13, Samson is now asking them to swear. **"And they said unto him, we have come down to bind thee, and we may deliver thee to the hands of the Philistines."** What great friends, I love these guys, you know? "We're not going to kill you. We're going to turn you over to these Philistines; they're going to kill you. But, we're not really guilty." I mean, it's sad, sometimes just sad, how we don't have enough wisdom to realize that we

are an instrument in the wrong hands. And then it says, **“And they spake unto him saying, ‘no, but we will bind thee fast and deliver thee unto their hands and surely we will not kill thee.’ And they bound him with two new cords and brought him up from the rock.”** And so once again, Judah ignores the enemy. In other words, the enemy is not afraid of Judah. And Satan should be terrified of your commitment in prayer.

And Satan sometimes, he can live with us; no big thing. I mean, we don’t, you know, our convictions aren’t really strong. We need to have strong convictions. And secondly, I find Judah was helping the enemy. I mean they were helping do things for the enemy.

And thirdly, Judah once again was doing the work of Satan, bringing him back. And then in verse 14-17, Samson is now fighting. And we see in verse 14, **“And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him and the spirit of the Lord came upon him. And with the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that were burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.”** In other words, the spirit of God just loosed them.

Now one of the things that really, really, really ministered to my heart last week for me is that I’ve always seen the spirit of God coming upon a person for doing the work of ministry. And that’s a wonderful thing. But in the life of Samson, I’ve been taught something kind of unique and kind of different. That sometimes the spirit of God will come upon your life to rescue you. You remember when the lion (in chapter fourteen), was ready to jump in his face because he was in sin. The spirit of God came upon him and he ripped it in half. It wasn’t to show how strong he was, it was to help him because if he would have died, then the purposes and the plans of God would’ve stopped. So, God had a plan. God had a purpose. And God had a destiny for his life. He was messing up, and the spirit of God came and delivered him.

I think sometimes, we need to see the other side, that the Holy Spirit can be quenched. The Holy Spirit can be grieved. The Holy Spirit can be resisted. In other words, not only is He loving and gracious and He's filling your heart, sometimes He'll come, rescue you and give you a second chance. Here, the very same thing happens. He's in a situation; he's going to die. Judah wanted to kill him but they couldn't. They're going to turn him over to the Philistines. They definitely burnt mom and dad so they're going to get him.

Well, God isn't done with this man so there's no other way but the spirit of God comes upon him, and in that moment, we read very simply, that God began to do a work. **"And when he was come, the spirit of the Lord came upon him."** And so this is the victory. **"And he found a new jawbone of a donkey and put forth his hand and took it and slew a thousand men with all."** Now I just happen to have a jawbone of a donkey. See this donkey right here, these teeth. This thing is a deadly weapon - deadly. I mean these are full-on spikes. You having a guy, one whack over the head will take you out. So this is a weapon.

Now the thing that fascinates me about the story ("Where you come up with that?" Well, hang out, its fun being here I tell you. We have great illustrations). But here's the thing, it says in verse 16, **"And Samson said with the jawbone of an ass, or a donkey, a heap upon heap."** So here's his rhyme, he's into rhyming. This guy is good with words. I'm serious. He's really good with words. He's rhyming. And it says, **"And Samson said with a jawbone of a donkey, 'heap upon heaps, with a jawbone of a donkey have I slain a thousand men' (he's boasting). 'And it came to pass when he made an end of speaking (he's holding this thing up speaking, prophesying), that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand and called the place Ramothnehgheb."**

Now first of all follow me very carefully because this, I think it's pretty incredible: the spirit of God came upon him. I believe that God would have, with his bare hands, been able to take everybody out. But here's what bothers me about the story. Who put that jawbone of a donkey right there? He was not to touch anything that was dead. So it wasn't the Holy Spirit telling him to reach down and defile the very thing that he wasn't supposed to do.

Secondly, not only was it a dead thing, it was an unclean animal. A donkey was an unclean animal. So he knew that, but he doesn't care. The spirit of God comes upon him; he chooses an unclean vessel - a weapon. He kills a thousand guys with it, and then he begins to boast and begins to make this rhyme up. And the very next verse says he's thirsty, and he's dying, and begins to cry out, "God, don't you care about me?"

I think this is so profound. Number one: "Samson, pay attention. My power came upon you. Now you're thirsty. You need to learn a message: that there's a weakness in your life, that you're still a human being. You still have needs in your life." And I think, sometimes, God by His Holy Spirit does things in your life, and then He turns right around; He shows you such a great thing and you can't figure it out. I think all He's trying to tell you is, "Listen, I just want to remind you you're human." Because somehow, we think we're pretty good. I don't know why we think this, that we're indestructible. And a phone call brings us into reality. When the women go up to the mountain top to seek the Lord, they come down to their husbands with problems; it's like, I think they say behind our backs that, "We've met the devil." You know? But it's true, I mean, all of a sudden they're brought back to reality. Well, what do you do with your personal needs? I can't believe, I'm not trusting God - No! A personal need is a personal need. A moment of weakness is a moment of weakness. A moment of thirst is a moment of thirst. So it forces you to deal with you are a human being, "I need

water.” And so I come back to God, crying out, “Give me water! I’m going to drink!” I think sometimes God just wants to balance you out because we get way over here, and we forget the other side.

But I want to go back, one more thing. Just because He anoints your life, you need to be very careful about what you touch. I would rather have you trust God, and God give you the deliverance than for you to be reaching for that which is unclean. So the end does not justify the means. That’s the danger. He was in total violation He had no business being in the vineyard. He had no business putting his hand in the dead carcass. He had no business picking up this dead donkey’s head. He had no business at all, hanging out with the philistine women. He had no business making a rhyme. He had no business mocking and making a riddle again or a song about his victory. He was out of God’s will, though God used him and God used it to get the work done, and God wanted the Philistines out. But look at what God had to do to get this guy to do what God wanted. Now think about it: he’s out messing with women. God had to somehow turn this thing around so he was mad enough to get back and realize the enemy was the Philistines. What’s he doing partying with them? So something had to happen so he would get focused again.

Now things happen in our life to get focused. I just think the story of Samson in my life is, “Steven, stay focused. Stay focused. Don’t be picking up things.” We had a guy the other day (I’ll give you an example), he was from Washington. And he wanted to come speak here, and I didn’t hear him and never heard of him before. And he says, “Well, I want to bring a message and would like to share it with the people.” And, “Well, I want to have you come down and meet Pastor Don.” “Well I really don’t have time.” But, “I want you to come down to meet...” Great guy, everything’s good, but, I just have always been taught no one can get into this pulpit unless I hear them or I bear witness. So we just said “no.” I think, “Well, there goes my Washington, D.C. time.” But, you know, do I

want to reach out and grab this or do I want to reach out and grab His hand. I want to be happy. I want God to be pleased. So, no matter how good it looks, we can't touch it.

It's like the sign. We're offered two hundred thousand dollars for that sign and twenty four thousand dollars a year, and that sign out there looked really nice and everyone is thinking, "We ought to get it." But all I could think about is, "What happens if underwear goes up there?" Then I'm the one who put the underwear, I don't need that. No! We walked away from it. So it's important that you keep your standards.

So we see here, in verse 18 (Samson in verse 18-20), it says that he is thirsty and he said, **"He sore athirst and called on the Lord, and said, 'thou has given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant.'"** This is good. He finally is looking up. **"And now shall I die for thirst?"** There goes the other side! You have given, now you're going to kill me – make up your mind, God, what're you going to do. **"And fall into the hands of the uncircumcised."** So once again, Elijah, he wanted to commit suicide; one woman drove him crazy. He ran wanting to commit suicide. Jeremiah was doing the work of God, got a little bit beat up, they put him in stocks and he said, "Lord, take my profit badge, I'm out of here, I don't want to do this no more." Then all of a sudden the fire began to burn in his heart. And you remember again, that David said, "Oh, how long, how long do I have to go through this?" In other words, you're going to learn the need of your life is great. So, yes God's using you. Yes God wants you to teach her. Yes God wants you to travel. Yes God wants you do all these things. But every once in awhile, He will show you a need you can't fulfill. And it might be a relationship you can't figure out, it might be a situation you can't figure you, and you are helpless and God just says, "Good, because this over here was I, and this over here was Me." God does the big things: He's the God of the mountains, and (help me out), He's the God of

the...I didn't say that, you don't believe that. He's the God of the mountains and He's the God of the...He's the God all over the place. He's under you and in and around you and over you and through you, and you live and move and have our being in God. So He just wants you to remember that you're a human being. And any great thing that you do, that is moving people, is Him – not you! So every once in awhile, He just reminds you, gives you a pimple right here! You're a human being. You're a defective human being, you know? Why there? "I just want you to remember that you're a human being with a pimple, right in your head, right in your nose!." Why? "Just because it's not you, it's Me!" Well, how can I teach? "It's not you, it's Me. I'll put a grapefruit up here, I can speak through a donkey then I can speak through a pastor with a pimple on his head, to speak." See, we're so concerned about how I look and how I act and how I teach and what I do and, help me. And then, "Am I going to die?" Again, the personal need.

And then in verse 19-20, we're done. He says here, **"But God clave a hollow place** (in other words God just did a miraculous), **that was in the jaw and there came water thereout."** I mean, out of nowhere, God did a miraculous and He mingled it with his weakness. **"And he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived wherefore he called the name of the place En-hakkore, which is in Lehi until this day. And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years."** And so we find that he didn't do anything great, he just judged Israel. He didn't change anything. He didn't build any armies. He didn't bring anybody, didn't even raise leadership up – didn't train anybody. Why? He was his own man. He fought everything, he did everything. What a tragic story.

Now I love Samson, he goes down in the hall of faith. It was Samson, because when God came upon him, he was obedient. And that's all that God is looking for tonight. You might go up and down, but boy when God speaks, you got to

listen. And when God speaks, and you listen, great things are going to happen. You might have to be reminded that He's God, or you might have to be reminded that you're in trouble, but either way, God is in control. So, He can break this relationship up here to save you. He can put a lion in front of you to warn you. He can send His Holy Spirit to get you out of problems. He can untie your hands, but don't touch that which is unclean – don't justify. "Well, it was right there and it came....," No! It's unclean. And I guarantee you that Satan will put it right in front of your face. You're having problems with drugs. You're going to find a joint tonight as you walk home. You have problem with pornography, it'll find you. You have problems with this. It's going to find you. "It's okay, it can find me. I'm not going to touch it! I would rather just trust God and not touch it. I know it's wrong." If you know it's wrong then let it go – don't touch. "But it's right there." Don't touch it because now you're dependant upon that instead of God. I'd rather have you trust God and fight and lose than to defile yourself because you need this to do.

"Let me have Aaron, I need Aaron, I need Aaron."

"Moses, you don't need Aaron."

"I need Aaron, I need Aaron, I need Aaron."

"Take Aaron." Who got Moses in trouble? Aaron. What's the message? You and God, period. Not you and God and your friend, you and God and your family, you and God and the church. You and God, period – a relationship that's from heaven.

And just one last thing: He'll never let you go. If Samson made it, you're doing pretty well tonight. You're in good hands. That's kind of encouraging to me. I mean, this guy, I would have killed him if I was God right then and there. That's why I'm not God. This guy, I don't want to destroy this story. "Well Steve, pastor Steve, Samson was such a great story in our lives until you came and taught us." Well, when you look at the whole thing, did God tell him not to drink wine, or have raisins or be, or have any grapes, huh? What was he doing in the

vineyard? Did God tell him not to go down to be separate unto the Lord? “Uh, huh.” What was he doing in the Philistine country? What was he going to marry this woman for? Why was he going back and sticking his hand in something he knew what was wrong. I’m telling you. There was something that was more powerful than the call of God – it was sin. Sin kept pulling him away, and finally it got him. And though the call of God is strong, and the will of God is strong, God will not force you to do what you don’t want to do. Samson’s flesh drove him to defeat. He couldn’t stay away from it. He loved the darkness; he loved to compromise; he loved messing around. He prostituted the gift of God, foolish man.

**Closing Prayer:**

**Father we thank You, and Lord we pray tonight that what great things we can learn not to do from these stories. And God, this is nothing. I mean next week, Lord, what a tragic thing for him to jump up and know not that the Spirit of God had departed. He was so blinded. And then Lord, his eyes were put out, and then his hands were bound. And now he’s grinding, around and around, all because he was foolish. Well Lord, it is encouraging knowing that, at times, you have sent your Spirit, not only to bless us and to fill us, but also to protect us and to deliver us. And we want to thank You for that tonight. And there have been times where we have found ourselves where we really shouldn’t be. And You have sent out a lion to remind us. There have been times that Your Spirit has come upon us, and God we have grabbed the unholy thing, and we know it. Well I pray tonight, that God that You would remind us how committed You are to us, that You’re not willing to lose us and that you’re willing to work in us and through us, and that’s encouraging to me. And so Lord, if You can put this man in the hall of faith because he was willing to be obedient when he needed to be, I thank You Lord for the lessons we’ve learned from him. I pray**

**tonight that there would not be this strong pull towards the world, towards the things of Satan, but Your Holy Spirit would begin to pull our hearts towards heaven. And that we would begin to think about heaven and we would think about the coming of Jesus Christ and the rapture of the church and, before we would do it, we would think, "I don't want to grieve You." And that God, we would begin to have a good mind and a strong mind and a heart that's pure before You. So sanctify our hearts tonight, and we will thank You and we will praise You in Jesus' name. Amen.**