

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Judges And Ruth: Personal Blessing Amid Group Apostasy

Part II: History Of The Era Of The Judges

B. The Record Of Specific Judges, Judges 3:7-16:31

12. Samson's Judgeship, Judges 14:1-16:31

c. Samson's High Cost Of A Careless Return To Lust And Sin

(Judges 16:1-31)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many people today think and live in careless ways to their potential harm, a fact we can illustrate:

(1) It occurs in our national politics: William A. Galston's column, "Trump's Hostile GOP Takeover" (The Wall Street Journal, February 17, 2016, p. A11) told of the following "disturbing hypothesis" offered by an evangelical intellectual on why many evangelicals are currently voting the way they are: "Evangelicals are terrified that everything they value is under assault, and they have concluded that only a strongman can stem the tide. So they are willing to make common cause with someone they normally would disdain." Mr. Galston reacted to this hypothesis, commenting, "But when you sup with the devil, as the saying goes, you'd better have a long spoon," Ibid.

One wonders why so many Evangelicals do not trust the Lord instead of voting the way they do out of fear!

(2) Careless living and thinking occurs in circles of scientific as well as religious leadership: Jeff Green's letter to the journal (Ibid., February 9, 2016, p. A12) admitted that "signs of global warming and its extreme effects are misinterpreted and exaggerated and therefore far from settled," and that "(c)hallenging the climate-change consensus gets scientists ridiculed, discredited and bullied into silence." Yet, since Pope Francis allegedly "captured the overriding moral and economic dimensions of climate change and how they eclipse simple statistics" in last year's "encyclical," Mr. Green opted to support the pope's view! This is even more amazing in view of God's Genesis 8:22 promise to keep the earth from overheating or overcooling for man while it remains, making the pope and many scientists go against not only scientific data, but also the Bible to side with a politically correct climate change theory!

(3) Careless thinking and living occurs at the grassroots level of society: Virginia Heffernan's review in the journal (Ibid., February 24, 2016, p. A15) of Nancy Jo Sales' book, American Girls: Social Media and the Secret Lives of Teenagers (2016) reported that "(a)round 70% of teenagers in the U. S. own an iPhone" and that "one of the main uses" they "make of their phones is to watch, wield and circulate naked pictures of themselves."

The review told of the abuses of this practice, that nude pictures are often circulated among many whom the teen who took the "selfie" never considered would see them, and, at times, the pictures are used as currency, being traded for marijuana and liquor, Ibid. Ms. Sales reported on the paradoxical effects of the practice among teens, noting how "a 16-year-old girl in an L. A. shopping mall" told her, "Social media is destroying our lives," only to have her friend shoot back, "Without social media, 'we would have no life,'" Ibid.

Ms. Heffernan lamented the tragic "desensitization" of many teenage girls by such social media abuses, Ibid.

Need: *So we ask, "What does God think of careless thinking and living, and how should we then live?!"*

I. After initially heeding God's threatening warning to repent of his lust and sinful way of life in Judges 15:14-19, Samson eventually indulged in a life of even greater lust and sin in Judges 16:1-20a:

- A. Sometime after the Judges 15 events, Samson went down to Gaza and again saw a Philistine woman there, a harlot, and he committed immorality with her, indulging his lusts of the eyes and of the flesh with a Gentile, greater sin than his marriage to the Timnathite Philistine woman back in Judges 14; Judges 16:1.
- B. The Philistines waited for Samson at the city gate to kill him in the morning when they thought he would be weakened after carousing all night (Judges 16:2), but he got up at midnight, went to the city gate, picked up its "doors, doorposts, and bar that secured the doors" and carried them "for . . . 38 miles (mostly uphill) to Hebron," Judges 16:3; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Judges 16:3. This deed humiliated the Philistines, for "the city gates symbolized national strength," Zon. Pict. Ency. Bib., v. Five, p. 250.
- C. Later, Samson fell in love with the Philistine woman Delilah (Jud. 16:4), so the Philistine rulers came to her, each promising to pay "many tens of thousands of dollars" worth of silver were she to learn the secret of his strength that they might be able to overcome him, Judges 16:5; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 407.
- D. Delilah agreed to their offer, and through repeatedly nagging Samson as did his bride back in Timnath, Delilah managed to get him to tell her the secret of his Nazirite vow in his uncut hair: he told her that if his hair were cut off, he would become just like any other man as to physical strength, Judges 16:6-17; 14:15-17.

- E. Delilah then informed the Philistine rulers to come and capture Samson after she had arranged for him to fall asleep with his head in her lap and to have a barber cut off his hair, Judges 16:18-19.
 - F. She then awoke him, warning Samson that the Philistines were attacking him, but he assumed that he would overcome them as he had before, not realizing that the Lord had departed from him, Judges 16:20a.
- II. However, Samson's reckless return to a life more steeped in lust and sin led God to withdraw His power from him, and Samson experienced disastrous ministry failure and great personal loss, Jud. 16:20b-21:**
- A. Samson's reckless return to a life more steeped in lust and sin produced a catastrophic ministry failure: this time, for the first time, he was unable to succeed against the Philistines, for they captured him, gouged out his eyes, brought him bound down to Gaza and made him grind grain in the prison, Judges 16:20b-21.
 - B. The Philistines thus gained great revenge on Samson:
 1. They took him to Gaza to humiliate him where he had humiliated them in carrying off their city gates and where he also was made to do a woman's work of grinding grain, Jud. 16:21; *Ibid.*, B. K. C., O. T., p. 408.
 2. They then took him to the temple of Dagon, their grain god (Jud. 16:23; *Ibid.*, p. 408; 1 Sam. 5:2-7; 1 Chr. 10:10) likely believing Dagon had given them Samson for burning up their grain fields in Judges 15:4-5.
 3. They made sport of Samson in possible revenge for his having made sport of them in his saying about likening them to donkeys upon slaying them back in Judges 15:15-16; Judges 16:25.
 - C. However, God also gained just retribution on Samson for his life of great sin and lust:
 1. Both in Judges 14:1 regarding the Philistine he tried to wed in Timnath and in Judges 16:1 regarding the Philistine harlot, Samson had desired them with the lust of his eyes, lusting after what he "saw" of them, *ra'ah*, "see," Kittel, Biblical Hebrew, p. 390, 393; B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 906-909.
 2. Accordingly, in fitting discipline, God allowed the Philistines to put out Samson's eyes so he could not again sin with the lust of the eyes in violation of God's Word, Judges 16:21; 1 John 2:15-16.
- III. God graciously heard Samson's prayer for renewed strength when his hair grew back in accord with his Nazirite vow, enabling Samson to kill more Philistines in his death than in his life, Judges 16:22-31:**
- A. The pillars against which Samson leaned held up the roof, so with 3,000 people on the roof, his dislodging two of them would start a "domino effect," collapsing the roof and eventually the whole building, Judges 16:22-27.
 - B. Samson's hair had begun to grow back to bring him into conformity with God's Nazirite vow, so he asked God for strength to collapse the building upon the Philistines in revenge for their putting out his eyes, Judges 16:28.
 - C. In grace, and wanting him to slay the Philistine oppressors of Israel (Jud. 14:4), God heard Samson's prayer, so Samson brought down the entire building, killing more Philistines in his death than in his life, Jud. 16:29-31.
- IV. However, Samson's life ended on a tragic note, leaving us wondering how much more he could have achieved in freeing Israel from Philistine oppression had he lived a righteous life!**

Lesson: *When Samson returned to a greater indulgence in his old life of lust and sin, breaking his final Nazirite rule, God withdrew His power, costing Samson greatly in ministry failure and personal loss. Yet, God graciously heard his prayer for renewed strength with the re-growth of his hair in line with his Nazirite vow, and Samson slew more in death than in life. However, he fell far short of the success he would have known had he lived righteously.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ for eternal life, John 3:16. (2) If God then warns us to avoid lust and sin, may we HEED that warning CONTINUALLY lest we return to a more wayward life that results in a withdrawal of blessing and great loss. (3) However, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins (1 John 1:9) and to equip us to have some blessing, although less than what we would have known had we stayed upright.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

A generation ago, a young Christian man my parents knew took a trip to a "sin city" to have "a good time," doing what he as a Christian knew he was not supposed to do, having a wild fling in the world, getting himself drunk.

When he awoke sober the next morning, he found himself in bed with and wed to a bar room girl! He knew the Bible forbade divorce, so he had to stay wed to her for life. However, he had a dreadful marriage until his wife finally died in an institution. He confessed his sin of a wild fling to God, but he had to live in a tragic marriage!

My parents warned my brothers and me about flirting with a life of lust and sin like that man, noting it would eventually cost us dearly just like it did that man. His experience was a solemn testimonial -- a huge warning to us!

(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation. (2) If God warns us to avoid lust and sin, may we heed that warning continually lest we experience a traumatic loss of blessing. (3) Yet, if we sin, may we confess it to God and depart from it, although the blessings after sinning will be negatively impacted by the effects of our sin.