

11. God's mighty wimp - Part 2

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Here I have several fishing baits, courtesy of Mr. Gary Hurley, a grand angler. I am sure that he has some fish stories to tell you about. All these baits would be so pretty and yummy in the eyes of fish Mr. Gary wants to catch. However, they all have one very common thing behind this enticing thing – HOOK. When Gary fishes, he is not there to feed fish with these baits. He wants to catch them and bring them to home to eat.

But when fish looks at this bait he thinks about having a dinner, not being a dinner menu. That is what bait does – to ENTICE. The Greek translation means “luring with bait.” The word ‘entice’ is found in James 1:14-15 in an image all anglers can relate to.

James 1:14-15 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

The account of Samson's temptation by Delilah also uses the word ‘entice’. Like a hungry, unsuspecting fish, Samson is drawn to Delilah's alluring appeal. Blindly the bait is taken. Fatefully the hook is set and Samson ends up on a Philistine stringer.

The life of Samson illustrates the ancient truth that a good beginning doesn't guarantee a good ending. The American poet Henry Longfellow said, “Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending.”

A. PERSONAL VENGEANCE

Judges 15:1-8 After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, “Let me go in to my wife, into her room.” But her father would not permit him to go in. 2 Her father said, “I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead.” 3 And Samson said to them, “This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!” 4 Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches, turned the foxes tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. 5 When he had set the torches on fire, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves. 6 Then the Philistines said, “Who has done this?” And they answered, “Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion.” So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire. 7 Samson said to them, “Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease.” 8 So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

When David faced the Philistines, he saw them as the enemies of the Lord and sought to honor the name of the Lord in his victory. Samson's attitude was different. It was nothing more than a personal vengeance. There's a very fine line between righteous indignation and a “religious temper tantrum.”

The word translated “foxes” also means “jackals,” and that's probably the animal that Samson used. Foxes are solitary creatures, but jackals prowl in large packs.

Because of this, it would have been much easier for Samson to capture 300 jackals. No doubt he enlisted the help of others. He seems to act like a juvenile delinquent.

'Hip and thigh' is an express for a cruel and unsparing slaughter. Samson made Rambo look like a sissy boy.

B. STRONG, YET NOT IMMORTAL

Judges 15:9-20 Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi. 10 And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" So they answered, "We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us." 11 Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What is this you have done to us?" And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them." 12 But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines." Then Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves." 13 So they spoke to him, saying, "No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you." And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock. 14 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him; and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands. 15 He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it. 16 Then Samson said: "With the jawbone of a donkey, Heaps upon heaps, With the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men!" 17 And so it was, when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi. 18 Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the Lord and said, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" 19 So God split the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day. 20 And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

The invasion of Judah by the Philistines didn't help Samson's popularity with his own people, who sadly were content to submit to their enemies and make the best of a bad situation. Instead of seeing Samson as their deliverer, the men of Judah considered him a troublemaker.

In v16, we find Samson is coming up another tongue and cheek poem. Obviously, he was no dummy and had a way with words. It's based on the similarity between the sounds of the Hebrew words 'hamor' – "donkey" and 'homer' – "heaps".

But his victory celebration didn't last very long, because God reminded him that he was only a man and had to have water to stay alive. So often in Scripture, testing follows triumph. No sooner had the Israelites crossed the Red Sea than they became thirsty and hungry. Elijah's victory on Mount Carmel was followed by his humiliating flight to Mount Horeb. If triumphs aren't balanced with trials, there's a danger that we'll become proud and self-confident.

If Samson had only heeded this warning and asked God not only for water but for guidance! "Lead us not into temptation" would have been the perfect prayer for that hour. It's when we're weak that we're strong and when we're totally dependent on the Lord, we're the safest.

C. DIGGING HIMSELF DEEPER

Judges 16:1-3 Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. 2 When the Gazites were told, "Samson has come here!" they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, "In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him." 3 And Samson lay low till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

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

Once again the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh combined to grip Samson and make him a slave to his passions. It seems incredible to us that a servant of God, who did great works in the power of the Spirit, would visit a prostitute, but the record is here for all to read.

D. WHAT ARE YOU AN IDIOT, SAMSON?

Judges 16:4-15 Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5 And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver." 6 So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you." 7 And Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man." 8 So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. 9 Now men were lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known. 10 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with." 11 So he said to her, "If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man." 12 Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And men were lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread. 13 Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom"-- 14 So she wove it tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom. 15 Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength lies."

I find four negatives in Samson's life:

1) He focused on the wrong objectives.

He concentrated only on a woman's physical appearance and on pleasing himself.

2) He handled his leisure time carelessly.

Samson's divinely appointed purpose in life was to "begin to deliver Israel". Yet he

seemed to have a hard time staying on track. He spend way too much time in the enemy's territory. Samson had no business whiling away his time like this when the nation of Israel was desperately awaiting deliverance.

3) He developed a close alliance with the wrong crowd.

Samson rubbed social shoulders with the very people he was supposed to subdue.

In the words "entice him," we see the chink in Samson's armor, which by now has becomes gaping holes obvious to all – even to his enemies, except to Samson himself.

In the beginning, he was goofing around with Delilah with the secret of his strength. But he was starting to come close to revealing the truth.

Judges 16:16-21 And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, 17 that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man." 18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart." So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. 19 Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him. 21 Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.

4) He didn't take his vow seriously.

This negative – Samson's careless treatment of a sacred vow – probably offended God the most. Solomon, in his journal, addresses the seriousness of a vow made to God:

Ecclesiastes 5:2-5 Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few. 3 For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool's voice is known by his many words. 4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed-- 5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay

The Valley of Sorek lay between Zorah and Timnah on the border of Judah and Philistia. The city of Beth-shemesh was located there.

Philistine leaders didn't want to kill Samson. They wanted to neutralize his power, capture him, torture him, and then use him for their own purposes. Being able to exhibit and control the great champion of Israel would give the Philistines both security and stature among the nations and would certainly satisfy their egos as they humiliated the Jews. Just like our enemy satan wants to enslave us, to humiliate us and to destroy us.

When Delilah began to probe for the secret of his strength, Samson should have been aware of his danger and, like Joseph, fled as fast as possible. But passion had

gripped him, sin had numbed him, and he was unable to act rationally. Anybody could have told him that Delilah was making a fool out of him, but Samson would have believed no one.

Many people think that the secret to Samson's strength was his hair. No, it was not hair. The secret to his strength was the Holy Spirit who empowered him. Even though he was a carnal believer, because the Lord committed Himself to bring down the Philistines through Samson, the Lord gave him strength when he needed it. But when he discarded his commitment his Nazirite vow, the Holy Spirit left him. And he became a Joe Blow in the street of Sorek.

In my opinion, v20 is the saddest verse in the whole Bible. The man with such a great potential, a God-given destiny and a God-given power, yet he didn't realized that the Holy Spirit left him. It is the same when a believer of Christ who becomes so entrenched in his sins that he doesn't even realized that he walked away from God.

V21 shows us what sin does in the life of believer: Sin blinds us, binds us and grinds us.

Proverbs 5:22 His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, And he is caught in the cords of his sin.

Before we start to chuckle our tongues to Samson, we must examine our lives about the temptations we face. So what kind of temptations you face? Would that be porno magazines your spouse does not know about? Maybe it is visiting internet porno sites? Or flirting with someone at the work place or neighborhood? Or maybe it is the TV show that you are not supposed to watch? Whatever the temptation is you know it and I know it that they are not going to do any good for us.

We often think that we can handle temptations. Actually, that is all the drug and alcohol users, gambling addicts have said before they got into the traps of the temptations. None of us could handle temptation. We must rely on God who is our Stronghold and Strength. When we submit to Him, then He gives us strength to overcome the devil's schemes.

James 4:7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

E. THE TRAGICAL END OF GOD'S MIGHTY WIMP

Judges 16:22-31 However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven. 23 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said: "Our god has delivered into our hands Samson our enemy!" 24 When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said: "Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy, The destroyer of our land, And the one who multiplied our dead." 25 So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may perform for us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars. 26 Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them." 27 Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there--about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed. 28 Then Samson called to the Lord, saying, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!" 29 And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and

he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. 30 Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life. 31 And his brothers and all his father's household came down and took him, and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years.

Samson killed more at his death than he killed during his lifetime. But how different it would have been had he first conquered himself before he sought to conquer the Lord's enemies. His whole life is a series of miracles and stupidities.

We might say, "It is an old Sunday School story." No, this is an absolutely relevant story that fits in anyone who is a child of God. I have seen many gifted people who went down in drain because they allowed themselves to temptations. It is a tragedy of the wasted potential.

F. APPLICATIONS

To become victor instead of victim, we need to cut through the cords of our sinful habits. The following four-point strategy, the opposite of Samson's actions, can set us free.

1) We must counteract our natural focus.

We should focus on "the hidden person of the heart" rather than on externals. How are our eyesights? Are they sharpened with eternal perspective? Can we see beyond the externals into the heart of another person?

2) We must guard our leisure time.

Since the devil never takes time off, our spiritual life must stand sentry over our pleasures and passions. Self-control is one of the aspects the fruit of the Spirit. Are we controlling our passions, especially during idle moments?

3) We must screen our close companions.

Let's take a good look at our circles of friends. Are they challenging us in the Lord or corrupting us into the world? Are they contributing to our spiritual dedication or to our delinquency?

4) We must uphold our vow to God.

Our commitment must be taken seriously. For richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse, our commitment to God must be steadfast. This is the only way we'll be able to stand strong when tempted – the only way we'll have the strength to pass up the tantalizing bait of fame, power, money and sensuality this world dangles in front of us.