

Thoughts in the Book of Judges

by George Verwer

The sermon explores the life of Samson as a cautionary tale about the dangers of disobedience and the importance of making godly choices in pursuit of a focused life for Christ.

Duration: 22:14

Scripture: Judges 5:3, Matthew 6:33, Luke 9:51, Romans 8:18, 1 Corinthians 15:57, 2 Corinthians 4:17, 2 Timothy 4:7

Topics: "Judges"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of loving one's neighbor as oneself. He shares a personal experience of realizing the significance of a small act of kindness towards his brother. The speaker emphasizes that even though these small acts may seem unimportant in the grand scheme of things, they are actually of great importance to God. He then references 1 Corinthians 9:24, where the Apostle Paul talks about the goal of running the race of life to obtain the prize. The speaker encourages the audience to live their lives with the goal of pleasing God and loving others.

Transcript

I want to share with you some thoughts from the book of Judges and then over into the New Testament. This has become one of my favorite portions of scripture because the Lord's spoken to me through it so much over this past year. Favorite portion not in the sense that it comforts me but in the sense that it warns me.

Judges and chapter 14. Starting from verse one. And Samson said unto his father get her for me for she pleases me well.

But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord that he sought an occasion against the Philistines for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. Then went Samson down and his father and his mother to Timnath and came to the vineyards of Timnath and behold a young lion roared against him and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him and he rent him as he would have rent a kid and he had nothing in his hand but he told not his father or his mother what he had done and he went down and talked with the woman and she pleased Samson well and after a time he returned to take her and he turned aside to see the carcass of the and behold there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion and he took thereof in his hands and went on eating and came to his father and mother and he gave them and they did eat but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion. And over into chapter 16 and verse 17.

There hath not come a razor upon mine head for I have been Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb. If I be shaven then my strength will go from me and I shall become weak and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines saying come up this once for he has showed me all his heart.

Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her and brought money in their hand and she made him sleep upon her knees and she called for a man and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head and she began to afflict him and his strength went from him. And she said the Philistines be upon thee Samson and he woke out of his sleep and said I will go out as at other times before and shake myself and he wished not that the lord was departed from him. It's a tremendous warning to me.

The lord's spoken to me over and over again through this passage over the past year of what can happen to a life that from the beginning is dedicated to God and yet for various reasons ended up to a large extent as a failure. Yes he achieved a great victory at the end of his life but I don't believe that God was able to accomplish if we can say this that God was able to accomplish all that he wanted to through that man Samson. It seemed that his life was a series of defeats in his personal life even though it might have been victories in outward experience in physical experience.

This man Samson was a man who before from before his birth was dedicated to the service of God. A man with tremendous potential for making an impact for God in the generation in which he lived. A man who God could use to smash the power of the heathen that was so much over the Philistine of the Israelites at that time and yet he wasted so much of his life.

You remember that there were three things that marked out a Nazarite a man that was dedicated to God. Three things we find in the book of Leviticus I think it is that marked out a Nazarite. He was a man who was never to shave the hair of his head.

He was a man who was never to drink strong drink and he was a man who was never to touch any dead thing and you think that these were Samson's strong points. These were Samson's points of contact with God. These were the signs that set him apart and yet we find in reading this passage that these were the three things where he failed.

These were the three things where he fell down and it seems as we read this passage that Samson tempted God. Samson tempted God in the sense that he saw how far he could go without actually breaking God's commandment to him. It seems that he went as far as he could to see what God would do to him and when God didn't seem to do anything he went a little further and a little further and eventually he fell.

The first occasion we read about in chapter in verse six of that first chapter he was down in the vineyards of Timnath and the lion roared against him. Nothing wrong with being down in the vineyards of Timnath. Didn't say that a Nazirite couldn't go down to a vineyard but it seems to me that he was in a place where he could easily be tempted.

It doesn't say that he couldn't go there but he was in a place where the wine was made and he could easily be tempted and it seems to me that he knew this because it says he didn't tell his father or mother what he had done. I don't believe his father and his mother were down with him there in the vineyards of Timnath. It says in verse five Samson went down his father and his mother to Timnath and came to the vineyards of Timnath.

I don't believe that his mother and his father from what follows on were actually with him when he was in those vineyards because it said he didn't tell his father and mother what he had done when he killed that lion and he had a guilty conscience. He knew that he shouldn't have been there and it seems that because he got away with it, because nothing happened to him, he thought that it was all right and he tested God a little further to see if he could go any further and there's a great danger amongst us as young Christians of doing this, of thinking I can sin and God will forgive me, of thinking that he's forgiven me in the past so I can do it again and he'll forgive me again and we know what the book of Romans says about that. God forbid that we should continue in sin.

Yet this was what Samson did. He thought that he could get away with it and so next time he went a little further and we read a little further down the chapter that he walked past that way again and he saw the dead lion and he went across and he took the honey out of the lion and took it for his parents to eat. Again it doesn't say that he did anything wrong.

It doesn't say that he touched that dead lion. He could quite easily have reached in and taken that honey out without touching that carcass and yet again it says he told them not that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion. Why? Nothing wrong with eating honey as far as I can see.

I believe he had a guilty conscience. He knew that he'd been in that place where he could easily have disobeyed God. He knew that again he'd been testing.

He'd been going to see how far he could go. He'd been sailing close to the wind and he had a guilty conscience. He didn't tell his parents.

He didn't tell his mother and father where he'd taken that honey from. He told them not that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion. As we've been meeting together over these past days, every day has brought along decisions, choices that we've had to make and sometimes we may think they're not very important.

Sometimes no one else sees the decision that we make. It just concerns us and the Lord and we think that we can get away with it and we think that because it's a small thing it won't really affect our effectiveness for the Lords we get out on these teams. It won't really affect our communion with God and our communion with the rest of the team.

It won't really affect future decisions that we have to make and yet if we read the story of Samson Wright, we find that these little things are very important because every time we make a decision we are getting ourselves into a frame of mind of either believing of obeying God or doing our own will and Samson got into the habit of doing what he wanted to do and because he got into that habit when the big test came he was facing that way he was in that frame of mind and so he fell. He got into the habit of doing his own will instead of the will of God and although they might have seemed small things to him the progressive choices weakened him and weakened him and weakened him until eventually he fell through successive weakness. And we should never think that a small choice a small decision isn't important.

I remember when I was at college at Bible college that it seemed such a small thing at the time but many of the cups didn't have handles on them. They're made of china and the fellows washing them up weren't always too careful and a lot of the handles got broken off and you'd find at mealtimes there's often a rush for the cups with the handles because if you pick up a cup of hot tea with a cup without a handle you tend to burn your fingers and it seemed such a silly little thing and I didn't I thought well is it really right to be

convicted about a thing like that it seems such a small a small thing yet God began to speak to me and say why are you always rushed for those cups with those handles it means that your brother has one without a handle someone else. I thought well that's stupid you know God's not really like that he's not interested in silly little things like that.

Yet I began to see that this was a very practical way of showing whether I loved my neighbor as myself. If I was so eager to get one of those cups with a handle surely it mattered it to my brother as well. If I was so eager to get one of those cups then it must have been pretty important and it must have been quite a big thing in my life it seemed to loom large and I realized that although this was a small thing it was one of the things that God was intensely interested in and you'll find out on your team that there are little things that arise day by day and you may tend to think well it's not important it won't affect the team and yet as they accumulate as they build up you'll find that the overall impact has a great deal of effect and if you continually choose your own way then a big choice will come along and you'll have got into that frame of mind and you'll choose your own way again and perhaps that time God will do something about it.

And the final test came for Samson didn't it the third thing and he gave away the secret of his strength and he fell and he wished not that the Lord had departed from him he wished not that the Lord had departed from him. They're terrible words you remember that the apostle Paul he said that he kept his body under subjection lest after preaching to others he himself should be made a castaway lest he himself should be put on the shelf and this seems to be what happened to Samson because he continually chose his own way even though there was such tremendous potential from the beginning of his life he continually chose his own way until finally God had to say I'll have to put you to one side and the apostle Paul was a man whose life seems to be the exact opposite. The apostle Paul was the man not just because he was dedicated not just because he was such a tremendous preacher a tremendous missionary it wasn't anything in himself it was because right from the start of his conversion it seems that he set his mind on one thing and he stuck at it.

Samson it seems had his mind on many things doing his own way doing what pleased him and that varied from day to day and the book of James says that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways and if you have more than one goal in life then you're going to be unstable. So many young people are drifting this way and that way because they can't make up their minds what they're going to do they can't make up their minds what God's wanting them to do they can't just set their eyes on one goal and stick to it and this is the only kind of life that's going to make an impact for God in our generation. There are so many people who have so many different ambitions and they should all be subordinated to this one desire to please God to be like Christ.

If they aren't then we'll find that we're unstable sometimes we have a tremendous desire to fulfill this ambition sometimes we have a tremendous desire to fulfill that ambition and we find that we never really make an impact in either of them and even in the secular world you'll find that a man who sets his mind on something achieves it and even more so in the spiritual realm. The apostle Paul set his mind on one thing and he went through life like an arrow towards his target like a runner towards the tape and he achieved that goal. It seemed a narrow kind of life that the apostle Paul lived.

He listed in Philippians the things that he'd laid aside, some of them in order that he might know Christ. I think there were many other things that he'd laid aside. The comfort of a nice home, of a family, of a good job, of friends around him.

He laid all those things aside for journeyings and for fastings and for weary nights and days, for persecution and misunderstanding. He laid aside the secondary things, the things that were maybe good but not the best, so that he could please Christ and be like him. And you'll find friends if you're determined to live this kind of life who will criticize, who will misunderstand, who will say that you're being stupid, even Christian people.

They won't understand. They'll say that this kind of life is a narrow life, is a legalistic life and it can be if you do it just out of your own strength, out of some kind of asceticism. But the point about the apostle Paul was he didn't do it for that reason.

He did it because his mind, his eyes were taken up with something better. He did it because he realized the situation he was in. In every year in O.M. I hear these messages on warfare and sometimes I begin to think that this is going a bit too far or these messages over and over and over again about warfare.

And yet this past year, as this has been my third year now working throughout the year on O.M., it's hit home to me harder than ever that this message is needed more than ever. Because it's only as we realize the situation that we're in that we're willing to put aside these secondary things. And it's only because we don't realize the situation we're in that we're clinging to them all the time, because we think they're so important.

And if we only realized that we're here to do battle for God, it would be a little thing to set aside all these things that make up our lives, all these things that we think are necessary to make us so happy. And the apostle Paul realized the situation he was in and so he set aside these things to aim towards the one goal that he had in life. A narrow life? I don't think so.

A legalistic life? I don't think so. I think that the apostle Paul must have been one of the most happy, the most rejoicing men in the history of humanity, perhaps next to the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not a difficult life.

It's not a legalistic life. It's not an unhappy life. It's like the story, those of you who have read Peace with God, you remember Billy Graham uses the illustration of the gospel saying how someone doesn't object if you take away their dry bread and give them a stake in their place.

How non-Christians say, well, you have to give up this and this and this to become a Christian. You know, even after we've become Christians, we still have that attitude. And we hang on to our little dry crusts of bread.

And we think they're so important, because we don't realize that God in all his love is trying to take away those dry crusts and give us something far better in its place. And we hang on to these things and we think they're so important. Our reputation, our desire for a good education, our desire for a nice home, our desire to make an impact in the sense of being well known, our desire to achieve the top, instead of willing to be made a servant, instead of willing to do something and never get any recognition for it, instead of being willing to do something for the honor of Christ and for his glory and just for his commendation.

It's so easy to get caught into living our lives for other reasons, into living our lives with other goals, even as Christians, clinging on to these things which really, in the light of eternity, are so unimportant, so unimportant. The Apostle Paul had, I say he had one goal, but in a sense he had several which came out from that one goal. And I'd like to just read them to you.

It's found in Corinthians, in the passage you just quoted. 1 Corinthians chapter 9. 1 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 24. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize, so run that ye may obtain.

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run not as uncertainly, so fight I not as one that beateth the air, but I keep unto my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

There are at least four things here that were on his heart. He wanted to obtain an incorruptible crown. He said that he ran not as uncertainly.

He said he fought not as one that beateth the air. And he had this great desire in his heart that he shouldn't become a castaway after having preached to others. Did he achieve them? Did he at the end of his life? Could he those four things have come true? He could.

I didn't realize it just till a week or so ago, a month or so ago, when I was reading in 2 Timothy, how wonderfully that links up with this passage in Corinthians. How he mentions those four things specifically as having been accomplished. Turn to 2 Timothy.

I've read this verse so many times, and it's the kind of verse you often read at youth meetings to challenge people about fighting a good fight and all that kind of thing. 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 7 and 8. He says, I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course.

I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness with which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day. He said he wanted to run not as uncertainly.

He said at the end, I have finished my course. He said I fight not as one that beateth the air. He said at the end, I have fought a good fight.

He said, I don't want after having preached to others to become a castaway. At the end of his life, he could say, I have kept the faith. And he wanted to obtain an incorruptible crown.

And at the end of his life, he said, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day. He set his mind on one thing and he got it. He got it.

Remember the Apostle Paul when he was writing to the Romans, he said, I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in me. Do you find the life of following Christ hard? Do you find that all this discipleship you read about, you hear about on tapes, you find that it's not very pleasant to your character, it's not very pleasant to your human nature? Do you wonder, well, is it really necessary? Do you think, well, how am I going to live this kind of life? I believe that we'll be hearing more about how we can in the next message. But here's one reason why the Apostle Paul was able to live this kind of life.

He realized that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory which would be revealed in him. And although men will misunderstand, although even fellow Christians perhaps won't understand, it won't matter because our eyes will be taken up with the glory which shall be revealed in us. You remember there's a little verse when Jesus was making his way to Jerusalem to be crucified, it said as he passed through Jericho the people would not receive him because his face was set as though

he were to go to Jerusalem.

And we'll find that if our faces are set towards Jerusalem, if our faces are set towards the glory that is laid up for us, then many people won't receive us, many people won't understand, many people will perhaps despise us, but it won't matter because we have our eyes set on the goal. And all the frustrations that come with our trying to live the life of Christ in our own flesh and our own strength will disappear because our minds will be taken up with him. And that's all that matters.

That's the kind of life that's going to make an impact in the area where you work in these next few weeks. It's the kind of life that's going to make an impact on your church as you go back to your own home area. Not because you talk about all the blessings you've had, not because you challenge your church about discipleship, about evangelism, about prayer, but because they see that your eyes are taken up with Christ, your mind's taken up with him and your life has been changed because of it.

That's the kind of life that'll make an impression on your college, on your church, on your place of work. And I pray that it'll be the kind of life that all of us want to live. This one thing dominating our minds is to please Christ, to be like him, our eyes fixed on his glory.

Amen. Shall we pray?

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