

Conquered (A Message for Men)

by Glenn Meldrum

Samson's failure to live up to his calling as a Nazarite and his refusal to surrender to God's control led to destruction and harm to himself and others, illustrating the concept of spiritual prostitution.

Duration: 1:02:22

Scripture: Judges 16:20-21, James 1:14-15, James 4:6-8

Topics: "Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of being conquered by God. He emphasizes the importance of coming near to God and allowing Him to capture our hearts. The preacher highlights the need for humility and surrender to God, as well as resisting the devil. He also warns about the persistence of temptation and the destructive nature of sin, while also acknowledging the potential impact of righteousness. The sermon references the book of James, particularly chapter 4, and encourages listeners to seek God's grace and submit to His will.

Transcript

So what we're going to do is we're going to look at Samson and Delilah. Turn with me to Judges, 16th chapter of Judges. But to set the picture of what's going on in this situation, I want to read a verse that's out of the 13th chapter in the first verse that says, Again, the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, so the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years.

And that sets the picture of what's going on in this situation. The children of Israel had rebelled against God, and so as is the typical thing in Scripture that you find, and this is a cycle that Israel went through on a constant basis, very unfortunate, but it is the reality that they faced. And what it was is that they would walk with God, and as they would walk with God, God would bless them.

They'd start taking for granted the blessing, and they'd start turning from God, looking to the blessing, trusting in the blessing rather than God. And so then as they would begin to trust in their blessings, they would walk away from God, and then they would rebel against God. God would send prophets to warn them, to call them to repentance.

They wouldn't heed the call, so then God eventually would bring oppressors upon them and bring them into bondage, that they might feel the pain of their sin and their rebellion, that they might call out for repentance. Then they would repent of their sins. When they would repent of their sins, God would begin

to bless them.

When they would be blessed, the whole cycle would start over again. And that's a cycle that goes on with Israel constantly, and it's also a cycle that goes on within the church, and it's also a cycle that goes on in a personal way in our own lives. We face that same thing on a very personal basis.

And so in this situation, they had rebelled against God, so God had allowed Israel to be oppressed by the Philistines. And so it lasted 40 years, and they began to cry out to the Lord. And so when they started to cry out to the Lord, God would raise up a judge.

And a judge would be somebody that would be there to bring deliverance to Israel from their particular bondage, because God wanted to be their king and the ruler over them. He would have judges that he would rule through, not an earthly king. Eventually, they called for an earthly king, and I'm not going to take the time to go there.

But that kind of sets the scenario. Israel is under bondage with the Philistines. They're being oppressed in a tremendous way, keeping them in a place so downtrodden and abused that they couldn't rise up.

And so God was going to raise up a man, and his name was Samson. And what the story is in Judges 16, is a man named Manoah, his wife was sterile. Sterility, they thought of as a curse from God.

And that when he was blessing the man and his wife, he would bless them with fertility. If they weren't being fertile, there was something spiritually wrong. And the spiritual idea of that is very true.

I'm not going to take time to try and build that, but it's very true too. If we're not being fruitful in our spiritual lives, then there's something wrong. Barrenness in an individual or barrenness in the church is never a blessing.

It's always a curse. It's not a healthy thing. So Manoah's wife was sterile.

An angel of the Lord came to her and told her that she would conceive a son. He must be raised as a Nazarite. Then after she told her husband that, they went and inquired and had another confrontation with the angel that confirmed it to Manoah that he must be a Nazarite, that he must be raised in a particular way.

And the scriptures just give a few ideas and the criterias of what a Nazarite was, but really the whole thing comes down to be that they were to be an individual set apart for God's use, sanctified for his use, and only for his use. So they weren't to partake of the vine in any way, shape, or form, which I think is really telling of where God's heart is, that they weren't to partake of the vine as far as grapes or grape juice or wine. That they were totally to abstain from it.

They didn't cut their hair as a sign of covenant with God. They were to walk in holiness and relationship with God. God was taking this newborn boy that they would soon have and raise him into a man and he was to be a man totally set apart for God.

He was to be a man holy for God, pursuing God with everything in his life. But there was a problem with Samson as he grew up in his life. There was a problem.

We have so much of the Samson story brought out in our Sunday school classes for children. I don't think Samson is a guy that really should be much looked at in that type of way. You know, we look at his

strength and everything else.

Wow, wasn't he a strong guy? But he was a self-absorbed, selfish man that was unconquered and refused to conquer his own passions and lusts. He was a man driven by the lust of the flesh, by the pride of life, by his own desires. And when you look at Samson, there is of Samson nothing noble in that man.

Nothing noble in that man. But what was the primary problem of Samson was that he had an unsundered will. He did not want to yield control of his life to God.

And so as a result, he set in motion particular things in his life and in the life of Israel on a whole and his family and in relationships that he had, he set in motion things that were destructive, things that were harmful. And we have to understand that we can set in motion things in our life that give life to others or things that give death to others. We can either have a character that is godly, that's imparting life to family members and to in the workplace, in the church and the community, or we can have a character that is producing death and inflicting pain and suffering on others.

We can look at it from a radical standpoint in the sense of saved and unsaved. A man named Martin Luther, the founder of the Great Reformation, brought out this idea and I'll just give it to you my own terms, but he said that there's nothing that an unsaved person can do that's good because there's nothing in them that's good because there is nothing in their life that pleases God. So no work that they do is acceptable to God.

So everything that a person, that's an unsaved person does is displeasing to God, everything, because their entire life is displeasing to God. And the only way that our works and our life can be acceptable to God is that we must first be accepted. When we are accepted by God, then our works, our life becomes accepted to Him.

And so when you look at it, you know, an unsaved person, there's nothing in their life that's acceptable to God because they have not been accepted by God because they've not wanted to be accepted by Him. But there's many times as Christians, we have these areas of our life that's not accepted by God because we've not allowed Him to conquer them. There are areas that cause us nightmares and cause other nightmares because we've not surrendered areas of our life.

So Samson chose in his life, he chose not to live up to his calling. So the whole thing about Samson is he did not live up to his calling. Here was this tremendous calling put upon him and he made these choices in his life to live contrary to that.

Now, what is the calling that we are given? We're called to be Christians. And what does that mean really to be a Christian? It means to be a child of God, to be Christ-like in our actions, in our love, in our care, in our mercy, in our tenderness, in our reaching a perishing world as Christ did and so on. We are called to be like Him and to live out what it means to be a son of God.

We can do that same identical thing, not live up to our high calling. That we settle for something so low, a standard so low that we're not willing to rise up to what Christ desires of us. Something I learned while I was in grad school was a thing that was called Constantinianism.

And what Constantinianism is, it's the idea that Emperor Constantine, which was in the 4th century and he came into power in 313 I think it was, was when he made his Edict of Milan. And the Edict of Milan was where he legalized Christianity. Prior to that, the church was a totally persecuted, separate entity from the

worldly culture.

They were not accepted by the culture. They weren't accepted by the government or anything else. They were persecuted for their faith.

When Constantine legalized the church, something happened. The standard of the church dropped. You can't even imagine how much it dropped.

It all of a sudden just plummeted and masses of people came in because now it was popular and it was easy. And instead of keeping the standard high, it says this is what it means to be a Christian, they lowered it to get in the masses. They had this concept that if you make the people Christian, then you Christianize the people.

And what the thought was is that first you go and you force the people by sword point, which is what there are accounts where the Catholic church would baptize thousands of people in a day by sword point. Then they would say you're Christian now. Then they would think of how to Christianize them, how to somehow make them Christian in thought and action, which is an impossibility because they were never truly converted.

And that is a concept that we have incorporated today within the church, within areas of the Pentecostal church, within the whole concept of what is called the seeker-sensitive movement. It is trying to make the standard so low and so shallow that almost anybody can come in. Then after they're supposedly in, then you somehow try to Christianize them.

And it's a total unbiblical approach to what Christianity is. Well, in essence, Samson was a man who tried to live a concept of relationship with God that was so low that it was almost non-distinguishable. It's just he did have a covenant with God, or let's say God made a covenant with Samson.

And as long as he held to the very fringe of that, the very basic of it, God would still honor it to a particular point. And as we will see, there was a point where he finally broke total covenant with God. And so then God was totally lifted from him.

The prince of God was totally removed. Samson was a man who fed his sensual desires. And so in Judges 16, in the first verse, one day Samson went to Gaza where he saw a prostitute.

He went in to spend the night with her. A man that's walking with Jesus and going to go spend the night with a prostitute. This is not stumbling, okay? This isn't man just, I had a problem, you know? This is a man plunging in because he wanted what he wanted.

This is really, excuse me, this is really put there to demonstrate the character of the man. This is what the man was. This is how he lived.

This was not a one-time event, though the scripture doesn't speak of it until we get to Delilah itself. And then we understand, okay, Samson, he had this thing that he wanted to sleep with women all the time. He was a womanizer.

And if he couldn't get one without paying for it, he would go and get one with paying for it. But this was what the man had become. This was his very character.

He went and he lived out what he was. Now, we may not necessarily be going to prostitutes, so we could be living it in our own hearts. We could be living it in our own imaginations or through pornography or something else that it becomes something that is lived out in the individual.

It's one thing if somebody's on the computer, something just pops up before them and it's just this rare thing that ever happens. And I'll be honest with you, I've never seen internet pornography. I don't want to.

I'm so thoroughly careful because I don't want that imprinted on my brain. I don't want that there to become something that's going to haunt my life and affect me because something that I understand from my life as being in drugs is that sin is addictive. Not just drugs is addictive.

Sin is addictive. Pornography is addictive. Lust is addictive.

Pride is addictive. Hate is addictive. Every single sin is addictive to the fallen nature.

I mean, it grabs hold of us and it starts possessing us. And we, each of us in our own ways, the things we've struggled with, we know what it is to have something grab hold of us and start dominating our thoughts, dominating us, controlling us where we start losing control in that area. And you know what I'm talking about because that's a human condition we all face in one thing or another.

And we become slaves to our sin such as Romans 6 tells us that whoever we yield ourselves to, we become the slaves to obey whether sin unto death or righteousness unto life. Whatever we yield ourselves to, we will be the slave to. And he was speaking to Christians.

So it's not just those that aren't Christians. They're total slaves to the devil. They have given themselves over to him or never relinquished to Christ.

So as by default, in essence, they are Satan's. But we can give areas of our life over to him, in essence, as we yield to things and we become the slave to sin. And I don't even want to try and speculate where that point is that we become a slave to sin and eventually become a slave to Satan.

I don't want to get so close to compromise in the world in my life. I want to be so close to Christ and I'm as far away from that place of backsliding as possible. And there is a place in Christ where there is eternal security.

I believe in eternal security. If I love Jesus, I will absolutely be eternally secure. There is no hope of backsliding for those that remain in his love, that abide in his love.

There is absolute total security in Christ. And so I can remain eternally secure if I remain in that place of intimacy with him. It's when I start walking away from that place of nearness that that security is taken from us because we can step out of his hand.

And so here you see Samson that was a man that went after a prostitute because that's what he was. And he did not understand that he was sleeping with the devil. He didn't understand spiritual prostitution.

I want you to think about this for a moment. And this is a very challenging thought. In the Old Testament, Israel is accused again and again and again of being prostitutes, spiritual prostitutes.

Selling themselves. Even in some places, they are accused of paying their lovers to do it. I mean, being so base, not even anymore to sell themselves, but to pay others to do it.

And so that's what God was accusing Israel of, that they became baser than even the pagans with it. And so again and again, he accused them of spiritual prostitution. But that same concept is in the New Testament as well, such as in James 4. We're going to look at James 4 towards the end of this.

And we're not going to touch on that point. But James brings it out, about being spiritual adulterers and adulteresses. And so it's a concept that's there.

What is a prostitute? It's somebody that sells herself that is for sale, for a price. There was this businessman that he goes onto a plane and he sits down in the plane and next to him sits this very beautiful woman. So he's sitting there for a time after they start to take off and then he starts up a conversation and he figures he's going to do something crazy or he's going to make a proposition to the woman.

So he makes a proposition to her, says, how about a one night stand? And she just gets angry at him. He says, well, what about for a million dollars? Give you a million dollars for one night. And she just started thinking about it and so he kept talking to her.

He tried to say, well, couldn't you use a million dollars? And eventually she said yes. And then they figured out a place, a date, everything, the meeting was set. And after that one night, she would get a million dollars.

And then they flew along in silence. And then he speaks up again, he says, well, I'd like to change my proposition a little bit here, make a little alteration to it. I don't have a million dollars.

Would you do it for a thousand? And then she says, well, what kind of woman do you think I am? He says, well, we've already established what kind of woman you are. We're just bickering over the price. The reality, she was for sale.

Now the question we need to, and I want to bring to us, are we for sale? Do we have a for sale sign on us? Will we give up our Christianity, our faith for a particular thing, for a look on a computer screen at something that we know is thoroughly ungodly from the very pit of hell? Are we for sale for something? Is there a price on our Christianity that we will compromise the faith for a particular thing? If so, then we are being a spiritual prostitute and in essence, no different than Samson. Though he had great outward strength, he did not have a moral strength. And I would rather be a weak man in the flesh and have strength that is spiritual and moral than to be a man that's strong in the flesh and supposedly manly, but yet has no self-control and no ability to truly walk with God in a place of intimacy.

He was a prostitute. Though he went to a prostitute, he was really the prostitute. He was the one really selling himself out for a price.

And that's a very serious thing that we have to look at. And it's a very major, a great problem with Samson. The other issue with this is, is we have to be careful that we don't think well of sin and the devil.

We can say that we don't think well of him, but what about in life? So let's drop down to the 5th verse of the 16th chapter. It says, The rule of the Philistines went to her, referring to Delilah, and says, See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you 1100 shekels of silver.

Well, this is Delilah. You know, Delilah is not a nice woman. As we look at her a little bit more, we're going to find she's not a nice woman at all.

She did not love Samson, did not love him. He was convenient for her, and in this situation, he became very profitable for her. But in the beginning, before the proposition was even there, it was just a situation of convenience, was not an issue of love.

I remember this one friend I have that was walking with the Lord for a time, and he started slipping back into sexual sins that he was very deep in at one time. And he went and started picking up prostitutes, and he picks up this one prostitute. And the prostitute goes to him and just starts laughing this demonic laugh.

And says, I have you now. You're mine. Just the devil speaking to him, and he was so filled with his lust, he just said, Shut up, woman.

I want to do what I want to do. Even though the devil was laughing at him in the midst of it. What a bizarre thing that we can give ourselves over to something, and even in the midst of that, the devil's laughing at us because he got us.

That we start yielding to a particular thing, whether it is lust, whether it's pride, whether it's greed, whatever name of the sin we want to put on it, is that he ends up laughing once he has control of us, once he's grabbed hold of us, and that begins to work in our life. And so what's the situation here? The Philistines came to Delilah. They hated Samson because to a small extent, he was harming the Philistines.

Not to a great extent. He was a judge of Israel for a long time. I can't remember off the top of my head how many years, but he was a judge of Israel for many years and yet accomplished very little when you look at the whole of his life.

And the reason why he accomplished very little because he would not walk with God the way that God wanted him to because there was this constant thing of a refusal to surrender to God, a refusal to yield these areas of his life. And you know, as men, we can have this thing inside of us, a refusal to really yield. We'll go so far.

So far, that's it. And I don't want to go any farther. I remember preaching in Montana.

There were some men there on Sunday morning. There were no men back at any services except the pastor. And one other service, one other man came.

And you know why? Because the very concept of cowboys is that's not for men. A thing so contrary to everything that Christ is. They thought they could be a Sunday morning Christian and be this particular thing and it would be alright, but we'll leave that to the women.

And now, men, we've got to do man things. The most manly person that there ever was, was who? Was Jesus Christ. No more manly an individual.

If we want to see what true manhood is, we have to look at Jesus. And when we look at the world, we see a distortion, a twisting, a perversion of what manhood is. And that's what we've been taught.

And so we really have to change the way we think about what it means to be a man. What it means to really walk is what Christ called us to. Best definition of sin I've ever read in my life.

It comes from Susanna Wesley. It says, Whatever weakens your reasoning, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes away your relish for spiritual things. In short, if anything increases the authority and power of the flesh over the spirit, that becomes sin, however good it is in itself.

Now that changes everything. Because we like it when we can go and put a few sins on the wall and say, don't do this, don't do that, don't do this, don't do that. And we feel we can keep somewhat in that parameters of that.

But now all of a sudden, the whole concept of sin is totally different. Anything that feeds my flesh, anything, or anything that robs me of love of Christ. In itself, there's nothing wrong with fishing.

It's not a sin to go out there and have a rod and reel in your hand. But if it robs you of intimacy with Christ, then it's sin. Or if it feeds the flesh a desire to be away from God and just to do things and joke and get with other friends that aren't, you know, or people that aren't Christians, not for ministry's sake, but just to hang with them, then you've fallen into a whole other thing.

Now you're in a place of sin. That which is innocent in and of itself becomes evil to us because of what we have done with it, because of what our nature has created out of it. And so, we can go back to that whole aspect of being a prostitute.

We can put the for sale sign on for a particular thing. And how crazy it would be is, I'll be a prostitute for a fish, or for a tennis ball, or for a golf ball, or for, you know, football on Monday nights, you know. And like I said, those things in and of itself are not sin.

Not like, you know, pornography is absolutely sin. There's no ifs, ands, or buts about it. These other things can be sin depending on what we do with it, with how we treat it.

Whether it's robbing us of relationship or whether it's feeding the flesh in our life. And so, here was a situation with the Philistines coming to Delilah wanting to pay her to betray him. And the very nature of what sin is, that it is out to betray us.

If we don't understand what Satan really wants to do to our lives, we will be deceived by it. When he comes to us with little temptations, you know, he woos us with something as if it will satisfy us. Not understanding.

And sometimes we become these blind sheep going right into the slaughter. And we're just letting that because we don't really believe that the sin is out to destroy us. And that there is a demonic force behind it.

We often can just think of the devil in a red suit and a pitchfork. You know, if we see that knocking on the door, then we'll be concerned. But that's not how he comes.

He comes as an angel of light. And the whole thing, we have to understand that he is a malevolent spirit that has one particular ambition. That is, his hatred for you is so evil just for your destruction.

And why does he want to destroy you? Because of his absolute hatred of God. And you are made in his image. So, he wants to destroy you with everything that he can.

And so, when we think that sin is a small thing or a little thing, we don't understand what is ultimately behind it. That there's this bargaining of our soul, the paying of the price in essence over it. And imagine how Samson would be appalled if he would have really heard what was happening.

But because it was secret, because he didn't hear it, he really didn't think it was taking place, though he was selling himself. There's a persistence of temptation. We've got to really understand this is something that we face as individuals.

I'll just give you this story from a natural situation. You know, I'm originally from Detroit. That's where I was born and bred and that's where I pastored inner city for almost 12 years.

And so, I was pastoring inner city. There was this whole move for almost the 12 years that I was there, I would say it probably took place in the whole 12 years, to try and get gambling in the city of Detroit. Six times it came up to vote and six times it lost.

But each time it came up to vote, first the margin was huge, then it was a little less and it was a little less and it was a little less. And each time, when the people who wanted it, no matter what the mass of the people said, the individuals who wanted it, they tried to deal with the arguments and they came at the next set of arguments and those last arguments until the seventh time they brought up to vote, it barely passed. And you know, I think of that exactly the way that sin works and I'm like, the devil comes, just keeps coming in.

Well, when we raise up an argument and he says, okay, I'm going to come here and he's going to keep hitting at that thing because he knows the weaknesses of our life. And as if we are not diligent and serious about it, he's going to keep hammering until he can find a door. Solomon brought up this tremendous verse that he himself failed totally with.

But he says, guard your heart for out of the flow of the issues of life. Solomon didn't guard his heart. He gave himself to the women, you know, having 300 wives and 700 concubines.

You know, he gave himself to it and built temples to the idols that they worship that became a plague to Israel until they went into the Babylonian captivity. Only then were they destroyed. And so we have to understand these things can constantly be hitting at us.

And if we are not diligent and vigilant in it, then we can be brought down. And so in Judges, the 16th chapter in the 16th verse says, with such nagging, she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death. So he told her everything.

Now, you know, when you look at the story of Samson, you think, is this guy nuts? I mean, would you, and let's just think of this in a practice, would you as if this woman is coming after the very source of your strength, if you had the same strength, she's coming after, tell me the source of your strength and you lie to her and she tries to take you and the Philistines come upon you. I mean, are you going to tell her now what it was? I mean, are you really going to? And so she comes back again and again until, what was this? The fourth time, I think it was. Finally, he tells all.

Why? Because she kept prodding him and prodding him. The thing that we think is that we're not like Samson. We think we're not like him.

We think that, well, if the devil comes, you know, I'll keep doing it, you know, and fighting him and everything else. But if we're not diligent and if we're not really wise, the constant prodding of this will become something that eventually will break us down. Now, one reason, I don't want to say one reason, the reason why I'm so careful on the internet is because, like I said, I know pornography is absolutely addictive.

It is more addictive than crack cocaine. More addictive than crack cocaine. And the reason why it's more addictive, crack cocaine is something you take inside of you.

Lust is something that is naturally in you. And so it grabs hold of your emotions. It grabs hold of everything and can be a drive that is harder to find deliverance from than crack cocaine.

And I understand that if I open the door to it, who am I that I could stand when multitudes of others have fallen? And if I just give the devil a little bit, you think he's going to stay satisfied with just giving him a little bit when he wants all of it? Because if I give him a little bit and just open the door and crack, he's going to be stuffing his foot in there and everything he can to try and rip it open because he is out for my very soul. He's out to destroy me. And ultimately, what he wants to do also is he wants to destroy through me.

Not just destroy me, he wants to destroy through me because the more influence we have, the greater repercussions our sin will have. But we have to understand something as well. The greater influence we have, the greater repercussions our righteousness will have.

In James, the first chapter, and James is probably one of the toughest preachers other than some of the Old Testament prophets. He is a tough preacher. But in the first chapter of James, in the 14th verse, it says, but each one is tempted when by his own evil desire he is dragged away and enticed.

Then after desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin and sin when it is full grown gives birth to death. Now, I think it's just so graphic how he illustrates this. He says, but each one is tempted when by his own evil desire he is dragged away.

Temptation only comes at us at the areas where we love sin. If I didn't love sin, there would be no temptation. Or if there was no areas of weakness.

So what does he do? He comes at the weak areas of the wall. He beats and he beats and he beats at those things hoping to try and make it crumble. Then every time he sees a few of the bricks fall down, he hits it a little harder with a little more persistence.

Maybe he'll back off a little bit because maybe we'll start to wake it up a little bit with it. But he knows that, well, if I just give him a little rest, he'll fall back asleep to it. He'll open the door once again.

He'll put his guard down. But we have to see that he's out to get us. And he wants to drag us away.

And then he brings out this idea, says that after the desire has been conceived, the idea of conception in the womb, and then it gives birth to sin. And sin, when it's full grown, gives birth to death. The idea that the sin just becomes this little seed inside the womb.

But then eventually it gives birth to a child and the child then grows up and eventually produces death. That little thing, if we open the door a little bit, what it can produce. Now we all know areas of our life that we know haven't been conquered by God and that we fought and fought and fought trying to get the

victory.

When I became a Christian, he delivered me from drugs. He delivered me instantly from drugs, smoking alcohol. I was instantly set free.

Now I am thankful I didn't go back to those same old things. But I've known many people that have gone back to smoking. And so for whatever reason, stress comes into their life.

And guess what? That stress is that there's a devil beating at that portion of wall when the stress comes in. And then you open the door up and you pick up a pack of cigarettes and you start smoking. You just say one pack, but it's got you now.

And so then you go back to God. You say, okay, God, give me this great deliverance. But what he did in the beginning, he did in tremendous mercy to a newborn babe in Christ.

You will not find that easy the second time. Now you'll have to go through a crucifixion. Now there'll have to be the agony of it.

And that is always the way it is. I found that in my own life. God gives me victory of something and it may be easy at first time, but boy, you give into it again.

Then you got this battle in your life. That's why it's always wisest to grab hold of the victory, not let it go. God will give us a victory when we're foolish enough to let it go, but it's going to cost us and it's going to cost us dearly sometimes.

But that really comes down to be desire then. Do I really want victory? You want to know one reason why as men we don't overcome? Because we really don't want to. We really don't want to.

We don't want the fight. So it's easier to give in. What is the goal of Satan? What is the goal of sin? And this is something I know we know, so I'm not saying anything new and greatly enlightening, but I'm just trying to bring the reality to us.

In this 19th verse, it tells us, having put him to sleep, Delilah, having put him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to shave off the seven braids of his hair and so began to subdue him and his strength left him. Having put him to sleep on her lap. Delilah is the perfect image of the devil.

And she puts him to sleep on her lap. Puts him to sleep. Not a big deal, Samson.

You're safe with me. I won't hurt you. I care about you.

I just want you to have fun. That's all. Not that religious bondage.

You're not under the law. You're under grace. You can do what you want.

Not a big deal. Do you hear what I'm saying? Falling asleep on the devil's lap. Falling asleep on the devil's lap.

How many times have we laid our heads on his lap and we felt, after we fell asleep, we felt him shaving off those locks of hair and feeling the power strip right out of us as a result. Feeling stripped of the power. Raped of the power.

That we gave it over. And we can cry all we want right after it and God will hear the cries of repentance. But there are times that we have to pay the price of what that is.

Even as Christians. He forgives. He delivers us from that.

But there can be the consequences of it. Let me give an illustration of this. You have a 16 year old girl walking with Jesus.

A boy comes into her life and she starts paying attention to him. He's not a Christian boy. So they start going out and eventually she sleeps with him and she comes home one day to her father and says, Dad, I'm pregnant.

She can repent all she wants but Junior's not going to disappear. Junior's still going to be there. That's just the reality of it.

We have a concept and I want to correct this. We have a concept. We've twisted the idea that all things are passed away.

Behold, all things are new. We've twisted that idea as if there's no consequence of sin. There is consequence of sin.

Even as Christians there's consequence of sin. Now he will wash away the eternal consequence in the sense that I will not have to pay in damnation for my sin but there can be temporal consequences for what I do in this life. And if I don't believe that I'm believing a lie because I can turn myself over to something that could destroy me.

I want you to think of that. Imagine how devastating one half hour could be with a woman that's not your wife. Just one half hour you could pay for it the rest of your days.

How devastating it can be. Imagine the agony that it produces upon a spouse. Just one half hour.

Just one half hour. Or maybe that she walks in on you and you've been watching pornography and you think that well she's not caught you. She's not known.

You thought you were slick and just one time she walks in. Imagine the nightmare you'll have dealing just for sleeping on the lap of the devil. Sleeping in his lap.

He lulled you to sleep. That was no big deal. You can get away with it.

It's not a problem. This is serious stuff. The moment we think lightly of sin the moment we think lightly of the devil is the moment we begin to open the doors to it.

I became a Christian before the lottery ever came into this nation. And so I have never ever once played the lottery. Not just that it is raw greed.

That's all it is. It's absolute greed. No Christian has a right to even touch it to go to a casino or anything else.

It is absolute sin. But I've chose never even to touch it. Not just the aspect of sin because I know it is thoroughly addictive.

And how do I know that I will not be the one that does it and it grabs hold of my personality. It grabs hold of me and then I am addicted to it. I have heard so many stories from pastoring and other things people devastated by gambling that they give over to it.

One particular story I remember was of a woman that fell into gambling and she gambled everything away. The house, the possessions, the husband didn't even know because she kept the records of the home. The house was repossessed and the foreclosure came and the day that the police were coming to throw them out of the house had come.

And that night before it happened she killed herself because she couldn't face her husband with what she'd done. How do you know that something is not going to get a hold of you so much because that is the very nature of sin that it's not going to so devastate your life and ruin you or have consequences that are so horrifying that you'll never recover from it. It's serious stuff.

You see he had a false sense of security and what was that false sense of security? It was a spiritual blindness to the realities that he faced. He was spiritually blind. And you know I've really come to a conclusion that spiritual sight and spiritual blindness is a choice.

Those who want to see God longs to give sight to us. Anybody that wants to have spiritual sight he will give them spiritual sight because he longs to give that to us. Spiritual blindness is a choice that we choose not to see, choose not to see.

I have seen people blinded by sin. Areas of their life, and I'm talking about Christian people, areas of their life where they are blinded in one thing or another whether it's obvious sin or whether it's some areas of their life that they're bondage or doctrinal error or whatever and you can look at it and say, God, how can they be so blind? And then I've had him so many times reprove me and saying, do you understand how blind you are? Do you understand what you don't see in your life that other people see? It brings me again and again to my knees saying, God, open my eyes to that which I am blind to within me. Because there's things in me that I don't see.

And in God's goodness, this is just the way he operates, he shows me what is in my life when I can handle it. You don't have a man walking in holiness and the very next day going sleeping with a prostitute. It does not work like that.

There is that slow compromise, the little steps, little by little. It's like it says in Song of Solomon, the little foxes spoil the vineyard. They come in one grape at a time, one little bit until the whole vineyard is destroyed as a result.

It's the little things, the little ways where we start opening doors to the devil where we should have never opened the doors. But what is so important about this? I want you to think about this. The Lila came hammering at Samson, trying to weaken him, trying to get him to the point where he would relinquish what the truth was about the source of his strength.

And finally, when he did, they cut off the locks of his hair. And do you know what the devil was really trying to do? He was trying to bring Samson to break covenant with God. Do you know that is the end result of what all sin is? To bring us to the point to break covenant with God.

That's what he wants to do. Every single sin, every work of the devil in our life is to attack us to break covenant with God. The things that happen when we break covenant with God, the first thing is that our

eternal life is at stake when we break that covenant with God.

And I don't know where that place is where now you're a child of God and now you're back so you're no longer child of God. But there's that place where a man breaks covenant with God. And that's what he wants.

He wants you to break covenant with him so that you come out from underneath the protection of God and now you are his fair game. Where you come out from underneath his protection. So when Samson gave himself over to sin, when he broke covenant with God, all of a sudden he was left vulnerable to the Philistines that came upon him, chained him, plucked his eyes out and then took him away as a slave.

That is literally the image of what sin wants to do, what the devil wants to do. He wants to break covenant with God because the moment we come out of God's protection, then we are just fair game for him. I mean, we become his plaything that he can do things to us and bring devastation to our lives.

That is the thing that it's all about. God is a covenant making and a covenant keeping God. Salvation is about entering into a covenant with God.

Entering into a covenant where I give up my rights and I give up my ways, I give up everything about myself to this God who conquers me. One of the covenants that is very interesting is what is called a suzerain vassal covenant. A suzerain vassal covenant is what you find in a very prominent part of the Old Testament covenants and it was the covenant with Abraham and it was the covenant that God gave with David.

Basically what a suzerain is, a suzerain is a conquering king. So it would be like a Nebuchadnezzar that conquered Judah. So he's a conquering king and a vassal is the conquered king, the conquered nation.

And so what happens when you have a suzerain vassal covenant, the conquered king goes to the vassal and gives up his rights, gives up his wealth, gives up his everything to the king that has conquered him and the conquering king goes and makes covenant back with him and says, now I will for so much tribute a year and for such and such agreements that we will enter into covenant and I will now be your protector and I will now govern you and rule over you and you'll come under now my authority. And so many of the covenants that God gave were suzerain vassal covenants. Here was a conquered individualist such as Abraham that God was bringing him under his covering, his protection but Abraham had to give up all of his rights and everything that he was and every suzerain vassal covenant was always sealed with blood.

There was always a blood covenant and the biggest one that you see was with Abraham when the Lord told him take the sacrifices and cut them in half, the bulls in half and that and he would walk between them. That's what the suzerain vassal covenants would be when they would walk between that and they would seal the covenant when they would do that. And so the very idea that God is a covenant-making God and a covenant-keeping God is he conquers us so that we come into covenant with him, we come under his protection but when we break covenant with him we remove ourselves from his protection then it's not just that we face the wrath of Satan because now we become his plaything but we're also now in the place of facing the wrath of God because we move himself out of protection.

Very disturbing idea. We have to see the big picture of what it is and so what happened? Samson was conquered. A woman with some scissors could conquer the strongest man in the world because ultimately he was conquered by the lust of his own flesh.

Solomon was a man that was conquered by the lust of his own flesh even though he was the wisest man in the world. We have to understand we may have strength or we may have wisdom but if we don't understand the reality of sin and deal with it we will be conquered by it because we are not wiser than Solomon, we're not stronger than Samson. And so the potential is there if we do not become a people totally dependent on the grace of God.

And so what is a tragedy? Judges 16, the 20th verse says, Then she, Delilah, called Samson, the Philistines are upon you. He awoke from his sleep and thought I'll go out as before and shake myself free but he did not know the Lord had left him. Let me take you back to the garden for a moment.

When sin entered into the world Adam and Eve went and hid behind some bushes, covered themselves with the leaves of the trees because they knew that they were naked and trembling behind the bushes they heard God walking again in the cool of the evening and when God's judgment came upon them they were thrust out of the garden never again to walk with him in the cool of the evening. What you find totally absent from that story of the rebellion of man what you find totally absent is repentance. There is no repentance there anywhere.

No repentance in Adam, no repentance in Eve and thoroughly none in Satan. But what they didn't understand is I know they mourned when they went out of the garden and they had to plow now the land and get their food by the sweat of their brow and by pain they would now give children. But what they didn't understand was the greatest tragedy, the greatest judgment was that they'd never walk with God in the cool of the evening again.

If I don't understand what the prize of life is then I'll never understand what the greatest judgment is. What has the prize given us? The privilege to walk with God in unbroken fellowship. If I don't understand that's the prize then I'm not going to understand when the greatest judgment comes upon me.

Martin Luther made a statement I thought was interesting. He said, if the greatest commandment that God has ever given us is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength then the greatest sin is not to. Isn't that an interesting thought? The greatest sin is not to love him.

And you know here we have a situation that the tragedy can come upon us because we stop loving God and that he leaves us and we didn't even know it. That's a sad thing. The Samson had been so far from God for so long that when the Lord finally told he left him he didn't even know it.

He didn't even know it. Now think of that in his daily life in the daily business and daily things that he did that God was so far from his life that when finally God left him he didn't even realize it. Now could that happen in your life or are you so near him that when he steps one foot away from you you know he's moved? Do you hear what I'm saying with this? This is such an important issue.

When I'm close to God when I'm close when I strive to live as close to him as I can I'll know when he moves a little bit away when I break his heart when I grieve him. But if I'm living a carnal lifestyle I won't know when he's totally left me because he's been so far from me already. That's where Samson was.

He didn't even know that God was far away from him and God was far away from him trying to woo him trying to bring him to the point that he might see where he really was. But it was only that he saw when God was totally gone. And guess what? When God was totally out of his life the only way that he was woken to it was that he was taken into slavery.

He didn't even understand it when he just woke up and there was no strength upon him. He only understood when he became a slave when his eyes were plucked out when shackles were put upon him. And how often does that happen? We only begin to understand how much God has moved away from our life when we find ourselves devastated by a problem devastated by sin devastated by things that we've done in our lives.

But where he wants us is to be so near him that we know at the least movement of God that we've broke his heart that we've grieved him. That's where he wants us. That's where Samson needed to be but that's where Samson chose not to be.

He thought victory was his right rather than a gift. That is a grave mistake that we can think. He thought that he would always be victorious because he was a Nazarite and no matter what he did he could live in his rebellion and think everything was okay.

Here's one of the problems of eternal security where people think that once saved, always saved because the problem is is that they think they have this thing with God that no matter what they do that they're going to be forever secure in Christ and there's no such thing as that because just as Ezekiel 3 and Ezekiel 33 brings out it says that if a righteous man turns from his righteousness he will no longer remember his righteousness. And that is just a standard of Scripture that there is that penalty, that price. And so here he moved away from the righteous that he once had.

God left him, abandoned the man. He thought victory was his right rather than a gift. We overcome by the blood of the lamb not because we are talented or seemingly good or special or anything else.

We overcome because we abandon ourselves and we cling to him with everything that we have not because of our abilities or wisdom. Victory is his that he freely imparts to those who see the need of victory. And like I said, he did not know that the Lord had left him.

Did not know that the Lord had left him. What a tragedy. Now let's shift gears here and let's look at what it is to be conquered by God.

Let's go to the book of James in the fourth chapter. James chapter 4. This chapter, this book is a very challenging book. This chapter is a very challenging chapter and a very wonderful chapter.

Brings out some wonderful, beautiful truths but also some very difficult things in our lives. And so what we're going to look at for a few minutes now is the fourth chapter of James beginning in the sixth verse. But he gives us more grace.

That is why scriptures say God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn, and wail.

Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up. I'm just going to highlight some particular points with this.

The first thing I want to touch on is just for a moment the idea of coming near to God. The idea of him capturing our hearts. He wants to capture our hearts.

The love of God is better than life itself. And so David said because your love is so good, I praise you. David's heart was captured by God and because it was captured by God, it became easy to yield.

You know, it's hard to yield to somebody you don't like. It's hard to surrender somebody that you hate. Is if I don't really like God, if I'm doing what I'm doing just because I feel I got to, it's my mandatory duty.

If I'm not going to do this, then I'm going to go to hell. It's hard to submit to him. Very hard to yield to a God if we think him cruel and harsh and mean and vicious.

Very hard to submit to somebody like that. But it is wonderful and easy to submit to him when we know that he's good and kind and tender and desires to change us for our good. He wants to capture my heart so that surrender and submission to him is a very simple thing.

That it becomes something that is so easy. When I love, it is easy to look at sacrifice as being no big deal. For those of you that are married, think of when you first fell in love, how easy it is to sacrifice when you first fall in love.

When he captures my heart, love will bring me to a point where sacrifice is no longer sacrifice. When he's captured my heart, sin no longer starts having authority over me, control over me, because I found a better love. I found a love that is worth the abandonment of all, to giving up of my rights and everything else, because I find in that place of loving him and being loved by him, that there's true fulfillment.

There's true satisfying in my life. And so he tells me to come near to him. And this is a privilege that he offers us.

Now, God is always the first effect. He is always the one that first does the moving. Because none of us would be saved unless God began to call us.

That's just the reality. No man seeks after God. That's what we're told in the 64th chapter of Isaiah.

No man seeks after God by himself. It is God that pursues us and begins to call us. And so he's a God that desires to be near to us.

And so when he tells us to come near to God, that he will come near to us, there's always that first thing that he does and starting to draw us. But he waits for our response. And when we start making obvious moves to come close to him, he has promised that he'll come close to us.

He's promised it. He wants to be closer to us than we can even imagine. He desires nearness with us more than we have ever dreamed.

And so he made the way for nearness and intimacy. It becomes our effort now to start making those motions, those steps, those moves. And what he does is in this section of scripture that we looked at, he starts presenting us of what it means to draw near, of how we draw near.

And I think that there's been a whole lot that we've looked at that is drawing near to God that is not necessarily true. But we need to have a better love than Delilah. Delilah is a good example of Satan and of the world.

We need a better love. I need a better love than possessions. They do not satisfy.

A millionaire has never been satisfied with a million. A billionaire is not satisfied with a billion. True satisfaction comes alone through that place of intimacy with him, nearness with him.

And if I don't understand the reality that he's the only satisfier, Psalm 16:11 says, in his presence is fullness of joy and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore. In his presence is everything I need. In his presence is victory.

In his presence is the desire for victory. He doesn't want us just to stop sinning. He wants us to stop loving sin.

So he wants to do deeper work than just that we stop doing a particular thing. But he wants us to bring his point that we stop loving doing it. And that's a really change of heart.

And like I've brought out in some of the other messages, the only way we'll have a right understanding of sin is we have to have the right understanding, not just of righteousness, but of God. Because when we see who he is, only understanding what pure perfection is, pure holiness, pure goodness, we begin to understand that as much as our finite minds can, then we can see what evil really is. I remember this one time where I was passing in Detroit.

The storms in Detroit come predominantly in the summer out of the west. I'm driving west on one of the main expressways. And as I'm driving west, there is this storm.

It is just jet black. And it just hit me that as I drove into the storm, it was no longer black. It was gray.

When sin is far from me, I can see its blackness. But as I start compromising, it's no longer black. It starts becoming gray to me because I redefine it.

It's good to keep it as far away because then we see its blackness. And so he tells us to come near to God that we might come near to him. Jesus, and this is a tough thing I'm going to say here.

It's not tough in words. Let's say it is tough in what he really wants to do in our life. Jesus wants to become the supreme source of our pleasure.

That's what he really wants to be. Do you know that's what he will be in heaven? The supreme source of our pleasure. Our entire pleasure will be him.

Our pleasure will be to obey him. Our pleasure will be to adore him and to serve him and to do anything that he would ask. Our pleasure will be him.

And do you know what will happen? Heaven will be the most pleasurable place that we could ever be because as our lives exist to bring pleasure to him, guess what he is doing? Imparting his pleasure to us. That same principle is what should be in our life here on earth. The more my life is existing to bring pleasure to him, the more I bring pleasure to him, the more I will experience his pleasure in return.

I will find fulfillment. The reason why we can find ourselves at times miserable individuals because we're not finding our fulfillment in him. We're looking for fulfillment in money or in the issue of pornography and pornography or whatever.

Whatever name we put on it. We're looking for fulfillment in something else rather than in Christ. And that is a part of the problem we face in the natural as human beings with something we need to overcome.

That we need to bring ourselves to the place to love him and enjoy him. We need to come to the point where we learn what is to enjoy our God. So many Christians do not know what is to enjoy him.

Prayer should become the place that we want to run to because we enjoy it. Because it is just so good to be at his feet. Because it's so good to talk with him.

It's so good for him to talk to us. It's just so wonderful for him to wrap his arms around us. That's what prayer should be.

It should be that place of just being embraced by God and embracing God. That's what he wants of our life. That we literally find our enjoyment.

Our supreme source of joy should be in him. If he is not my supreme source of joy, then I have idols in my life. There's idols in my life.

And so I can't beat myself up over those idols. You know what I need to do? Become like a Josiah and start tearing down those idols. Cleaning out the temple of everything that would rob my heart.

Everything that would rob that place of desire and get them out of the temple. Get them out of Jerusalem. Cleanse the place so that it becomes something that is beautifully attractive to them.

You take two magnets and you have the positive end and the negative end. Put the two ends together and they're repulsive to each other. You take, you switch one around and they become attractive.

Sin makes us repulsive to God because God is thoroughly, completely holy. So sin just pushes him away. It doesn't mean he doesn't love us but the very nature of sin is that it pushes him away.

But holiness is beautifully attractive to him and it draws him near. Drawing near to God as we will see here as we begin to move on and we look at the issue of repentance, drawing near to God. Repentance draws him near because we're striving to have a clean heart and clean hands.

That we want to be clean before God and it draws him to us because we become attractive to God. Nothing pleases the Father but Jesus Christ and that which bears his mark of character. What a phenomenal thought.

The only thing that pleases the Father is Jesus and the only way we can please the Father is that we must bear the mark of Christ in our life. We must look like him. We must love like him.

We must find our complete pleasure in the Father just like Jesus did. I had mentioned this man last night I believe, Robert Murray McSheehan. He made this statement that I think is interesting and here was a man who knew intimacy with God that he'd stand in the pulpit and people begin to tremble under the power of God and this is really part of what defined him.

He said let the Holy Spirit fill every chamber of your heart so that there is no room for folly or the world or Satan or the flesh. Let him fill every dimension of your life so there's no room for that stuff. If I fall in love with him and let's just say you've had a problem with pornography, if I fall in love with him, I'm going to see it as the evil as it really is but I'm going to see what the prize is and dear God, I'm breaking your heart.

I want you close. God, I have to overcome it and you will do whatever it takes and that means if you pull every television out of your house and every computer out of your house and every magazine out of your

house because you want to be absolutely clean. You don't want your eyes to be defiled when we finally have that desire that we'll do whatever it takes.

When you go to the arguments of Paul with godly sorrow versus worldly sorrow in 2 Corinthians 7, he uses one verse about godly sorrow and he uses or this one word about godly sorrow that I think is interesting and it comes out in the King James Version and it is what vehemence it wrought in you. The idea of vehemence is this holy aggression. Godly sorrow in our lives brings about a holy aggression.

God, I want to be close to you. Jesus, forgive me for this thing. Lord, whatever it takes, help me to get this out because I want to be near you.

To come near to God, we must understand what repentance is and I brought this out already that repentance is the gift of God. It's not a cruel God that calls to repentance. It is the gift of God, a loving God that calls us to greater intimacy, draws us near.

Don't allow repentance to be thought of in bad terms. If he convicts you a thousand times in a day, say thank you. I'll be honest with you about this.

It took me a long time in my Christian life to understand this. It took me a long time being a pastor. I didn't understand it.

It's only been in recent years that I finally came to the point and could say thank you, Jesus, for convicting me. Now when he convicts my heart, I'll say thank you for this, God. Thank you.

Because I've grown finally to begin to understand what repentance is. That it's not the cruel thing that I had the image of. That it was his tenderness.

And I'll tell you what, it sure changes your whole concept of repentance when you're thankful for what he's doing because what goes hand in hand with the repentance is you are drawing near when you repent. Every time you draw near, every time you repent, you are drawing near. Every time you say, God, forgive me of this.

God, help me to overcome this. I don't want to be this kind of man. Every time you're making that step closer to him.

And guess what? He's making his tend closer to you. It is the very nature of what repentance is. We're called here in this section of scripture to cleanse ourselves from double-mindedness.

And what is double-mindedness? It is being divided between two ways. And let me make this statement about David in Psalms 86. He prays, he says, Teach me, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth.

Give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name. Double-mindedness is a divided heart. I love Jesus and I love money.

I love Jesus and I love football. Love Jesus and I love this. An undivided heart, it says I love Jesus.

And that's where he wants it to be. Where our supreme joy is in him. And what captivates our heart will always captivate our mind.

None we are told the way to victory. And I want to say this. This is so important.

The way to victory. And then I'll close. The way to victory, he tells us, and we do this so wrong so often.

He tells us, Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will flee. What is the means of victory? Not rebuking the devil.

Submitting to God. What happens so often, I've seen this so many times, people start rebuking the devil, but they're not submitting to God. Let's just pretend that I take this Bible and I go to my brother.

He says, take it, take it, take it, take it, take it. The whole time I'm asking him to take it, I'm not letting it go. Well, I can go to God a hundred times a day.

Take my sin, take my sin. I'm holding on to take my sin, take my sin. Well, I'm not really letting go because I'm not submitting.

The first thing is submitting. Yielding, giving up to him and then guess what? If I rebuke the devil, there's authority behind it. Smith Wigglesworth made this statement.

He says, you can't cast the devil out of somebody until it's first been cast out of you. We got to first make sure we're walking in that place that we have the power to be able to impart to others, to do a work in others. And so victory comes through submission.

He brings out some strong words. He says, wash your hands, you sinners and purify your hearts. You double-minded, grieve, mourn, wail, change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Humble yourself before the Lord and he will lift you up. The lifting up comes through humility. That is why he tells us God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

I want to touch a moment on the issue of that word resist. In the Greek, that word resist means that he actively opposes. Now let me ask you a question.

Who did James write his epistle to? To Christians. So you know who he's talking to? Proud Christians. So what is it? God resists pride.

What is the first sin that ever came into creation? The sin of pride. Who committed it? And do you know what he wants to do in our hearts? He wants to fill us with pride. Do you want to know why he wants to fill us with pride? Because it puts us in a place of opposition with God.

That God begins to oppose us. He begins to fight against us as a result of it. It's a very important thing.

Pride is more ugly than you understand. An old saying says that pride is the last thing to go and the first thing to return. It's the hardest thing.

Pride is so ugly it grabs hold of us. The most ugly form of pride is that which we do within religion. That we're proud of our prayers and proud of our singing and proud of our religious actions.

The most ugly form because then we think it's good. And so pride needs to be dealt with. And as men, guess what? Pride is a human problem whether it's male or female.

But I think with men, we've got a real problem with it. It's a real major issue. And we're told in scripture that pride is the downfall of many.

That pride comes before the fall. And so we have to understand that humility is that place of repentance. You know, I will not repent until I begin to humble myself before God.

When I begin to humble myself before God, I will begin to repent. And that's where it begins. So really, in the end, it comes down to do I want to be conquered by God? If I want to be conquered by God, he's given us some very wonderful things here in the book of James.

And I challenge you to go home and do some personal study in that because I didn't have a chance to go deep enough and that's what I would have liked with it. But there's some tremendous truths about victory and being triumphant in Christ and how it happens right here. We have to understand what sin is and make sure that we're not being a Samson following after Delilah for our own destruction.

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