

Samson

Sermon #0903

Study by W. D. Frazee—July 3, 1959

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" Romans 15:4.

There were many things that happened that were not written down. But there were many things that were written down for our learning so we could have hope.

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" 1 Corinthians 10:11.

Who are the people upon whom the ends of the world are come? You and I. So the Bible is for us. It is for everybody in all ages. The development of a people who vindicate the character of God in the closing hours of this world's history is the great fulfillment of God's purpose.

Everything hangs on whether that can be successful. Satan has charged that God can't get a people ready to stand before Him without sin. All down through the ages he has been trying to prove that can't be done. And his special efforts are directed against good men to try to make them fall so he can hurl their failures in the face of God.

We talk about this program, and what its purpose is. Its real purpose is to develop that kind of character. Good people look at it and the question comes, Well, I wonder. I suppose it is all right to raise the question if we can find the answer. Truth is like silver. The more you rub it and polish it the brighter it shines. And we need have no fear of raising the question provided we get to the answer. But if we merely raise questions, that's the work of the enemy.

There were many people in Jesus' day that were raising questions and doubts. The main one among the twelve apostles was Judas. He did it so wisely and subtly that even the disciples were fooled. Nobody but Jesus really understood what was going on.

I want to warn you against questions that are raised without furnishing the answers. It is Satan's work to lead to doubt, and from there to discouragement, and to abandoning the work of God's program. That is the way Satan works. Let's beware that we may not be found helping him.

I want to study the experience of a man who was one of the outstanding men of the Bible. God intended that he should accomplish a great work. He did after a fashion. But he is put down in the Bible as a warning to us.

This man is Samson. Several chapters in Judges are devoted to his life. What is the purpose of it? Anyone who knows about the Bible knows that Samson is famous for his strength. He was quite a man. One time he found himself in a city. He discovered that the people had closed the gate and stationed guards. There was no way for him to get out. But he got up in the middle of the night and took the whole gate and carried it on his back onto a hill.

On one occasion he found a lion. He tore the lion into pieces. On another occasion he got angry at his enemies and he took the jawbone of an ass and slew right and left. Yes, he was a powerful man. I suppose he was the strongest physical man who ever lived.

What was God's purpose in giving Samson that strength? We are told that it was God's purpose to deliver Israel. Oh, that Samson had been willing for God to use him fully. He was used to some extent, but he never let God have His way.

It is interesting to see the special preparations God made for Samson. His birth was a result of a miracle. Like a number of Bible characters he was born as the result of a special messenger from heaven. This messenger was none other than the Lord Jesus. Christ Himself came from heaven to tell the mother of Samson exactly how to order her life, what to eat and drink, and gave her a sermon on health reform. In answer to prayer He came back again so the husband and father might have this verified.

The child was also to be on a special diet. He and his mother were not to use anything that was intoxicating. They were to keep away from habits that were damaging, and habits that tended in that direction. They were to avoid any unclean things.

"But He said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death"
Judges 13:7.

I find this was an interesting vow. A man who was under the Nazarite vow was very careful to abstain from any unclean thing. He couldn't even touch a dead body. He must not use any unclean food, or wine, or any product of the vine. He was to avoid anything that was possible to become fermented. He was to let his hair grow long as a sign of this vow.

Samson had been chosen by God to be a Nazarite from his birth. His mother lived in harmony with that life while she was carrying Samson. He was born with those vows upon him. As he grew up he was told of the miracle of his birth. He was told of what God's plan for him was. He was told he was to deliver Israel from the Philistines. He was instructed in health reform. He was kept from eating unclean things. He was not allowed to eat or drink anything from the vine.

With the wonderful instructions he received in the home, Samson could have been a wonderful deliverer of Israel. God gave him great physical strength to break the yoke of foreign oppression and stand free.

But Samson, the strongest man physically, was never strong in self-control. That lack of self-control was exhibited in several ways. It was exhibited in the indulgence of appetite, lust, and anger. In giving free rein to these various desires and fashions, he showed himself to be not a strong man but a weak man.

"Physically, Samson was the strongest man upon the earth; but in self-control, integrity, and firmness, he was one of the weakest of men. Many mistake strong passions for a strong character, but the truth is that he who is mastered by his passions is a weak man. The real greatness of the man is measured by the power of the feelings that he controls, not by those that control him"
Patriarchs and Prophets, pages 567,568.

Samson had strong feelings. He was strong in his anger. He took the jawbone of an ass and killed the Philistines right and left. Those who could get out of his way. Those who couldn't got slaughtered. Yes, he had powerful feelings, appetite, and passions. But instead of learning to control those, he allowed them to control him.

Samson went down to Timnath and saw a woman who was the daughter of the Philistines. He came and told his father and mother that he had seen a woman, and told them to get her for him.

"Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well" Judges 14:3.

His father tried to talk to him, and get him to listen to reason. There were others he might consider instead of going outside the people of God. But Samson said, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

This is a picture of the whole spirit and attitude of Samson. This wasn't the first time he had consulted his feelings and desires. This was the culmination. This was a terrible failure which was the result of many failures before.

When men fail in many decisions of life it is because they have failed in smaller decisions of life. That is what Jesus says:

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" Luke 16:10.

In spite of all his father and mother could do to reason with him, Samson still insisted. It came time for the wedding. It turned out a great disappointment.

I want you to see the picture of Samson's attitude. The wishes of his father and mother didn't make any difference. The fact that he had been chosen by God as a special deliverer was not considered of sufficient importance to stay his plans. What he wanted was the thing.

Well, it led out from one thing to another. We see Samson going out from the truth. We see he has gone so far in indulging himself that he is breaking the Seventh Commandment. He is visiting the harlot of Gaza. It should have been a warning to him, but instead he boasted of his great strength. Instead of thinking of his strength as a special stewardship from God, he thought it gave him license to do as he pleased.

There are always people around who will give us that idea. People who will flatter, praise, and encourage us if we have some special talent or gift.

So Samson came to regard himself as somebody who could get away with most anything. And the fact that when he was in danger he could fight himself out, it finally made him very careless.

As he goes on from one experience to another, Samson utterly violates his Nazarite vow as he reveals the secret of his strength and allows himself to be bound, and to have his hair cut off. Up to this time God had bore long with him. But when he made this final plunge in the indulgence of his passion, when he was the slave of Delilah, and in order to please her he violated his vows to God, God could use him no longer. So he became weak as other men.

The Philistines took him and put out his eyes. Those eyes that had so often been prostituted to the service of self, that had roved here and there and selected this and that object of beauty to rest upon, and to take in violation to the law of God, were now burned out with a hot iron, nevermore to look upon the face of anyone. And he was made to grind grain like an animal, going round and round like a beast of burden.

As his hair grew and his strength returned, doubtless he experienced a measure of repentance. The day came when he was finally called to the great festival of the Philistines to be on exhibit in honor of their God. He prayed to God for strength once more. Gathering those two pillars he bowed himself and pulled them together, and the whole house fell down killing thousands of those idolatrous people. So at his death he slew more than he had during his life. He accomplished something for God. The Philistines were terror stricken by it.

On some occasions the Spirit of God came upon Samson and he yielded to it. But in general much of his life was weak. Why? Because he indulged in himself. When he felt like eating, he ate. When he felt like drinking, he drank. When he felt like getting married, he got mad good and proper. And when he saw a woman he liked, he got her whether she belonged to him or not. That is the brief story of Samson—the story of self-indulgence.

Years ago I heard a young man make a statement I have never forgotten. He said, "My motto is to obey that impulse."

It was nearly thirty years ago I heard that statement. At the time this young man made that statement he was preparing for the ministry. He went into the ministry and made a brilliant success for a time.

But for years he has not been in the ministry. Why? Because he carried out his motto. No man whose motto is to obey that impulse can really succeed in the service of God. He may seem to make a success. Doubtless at times Samson's name was on the front page in the newspaper. But in the end his impulse led him into the path of utter failure.

What is temperance? Temperance is to have self-control, to not even touch something that is bad for you, and when you eat something that is good for you, know when to stop.

Will the people who are ready for Jesus to come have an experience in temperance and self-control? Has God put temperance and self-control in the third angel's message for the purpose to help develop those characters? Yes. And it isn't just to keep us from getting sick. It is to keep us from getting lost. We are to develop characters that we can stand without any question, no matter what the temptation.

Think of what a contrast Daniel is to Samson. As a young man he was brought to where the king's meat and wine was. What did Daniel do? He purposed in his heart that he wouldn't defile himself with a portion of the king's meat and wine. He requested that he might not defile himself. He didn't eat the king's meat or drink the king's wine. He succeeded where Samson failed. And it was on this very point of self-control.

God is calling young people today who will have self-control.

The real strength of a man is measured not by the feelings that control him, but by the feelings he controls. There are many people in whose hearts anger rises up at times. What is a Christian to do with it? Is he to express that thing and pour forth a torrent of angry words? Oh, no. Is he to take the nearest weapon that is handy and start using it? Oh, no.

God forbid that we should get our way by merely making people afraid of us. God forbid that we should cause people to be in fear of what we might say or do to them. God intends that we should consider all our strength to be a holy trust, to be used only to help others, only to deliver God's people.

These two failures of appetite and passion are mentioned as characteristic in the time before the flood. Remember that the Bible is written to help us in these latter days to get ready for the coming of Jesus.

"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be"
Matthew 24:37-39.

The two great failures written out in the days of Noah were the indulgence of appetite and the indulgence of passion. The abuse of that program of eating and drinking that God had given men, and the abuse of the marriage relation that God had given men brought on that awful floodtide of iniquity which in turn brought on the great flood of water.

So in the time in which we live it will be like the days of Noah. Is it getting that way? Drive along the highway and what do you see? Eating and drinking. All sorts of places to eat and drink. And are the foods that are there calculated to make men heavenly minded? Oh, no. You know. You see the very foods and drinks that will put to sleep the conscience of men, and stir the lower passions. That is the purpose of all the whiskey, beer, the stimulating foods that are filling the stomachs and bloodstreams of people today.

Do you see why God must give His people a program of strict temperance so they may overcome? Oh, how we should thank God for health reform, and never look upon it as a yoke of bondage, a way of liberty from the slavery that Samson was in.

The purpose of the music of the day that is so popular with the youth is to excite lovesick sentimentalism. The literature of today teams with these influences that lead downward.

Young men, are you going to be like Samson, or like Joseph? Joseph, when tempted by a woman he had no right to look upon, said, How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? And Joseph fled. He got out of there. He was falsely accused and spent years in prison. But he was true. He was faithful.

God is going to have some young men today who are pure like Joseph instead of indulgent like Samson. Young men who can control their passions. Young men who can keep their hands off something that doesn't belong to them. Young men who can keep their hands off somebody who doesn't belong to them.

These things are put into the Bible to warn you and me, especially in this last generation. This is the time when every plant is going to seed. We are living in the time when every man in this world will soon be either as pure as Joseph or go down the road that Samson went. We are living in the day when every youth will, like Daniel, purpose in his heart not to defile himself with the king's meat and the king's wine, or else like Samson, sell his soul for self-indulgence saying, Obey that impulse.

If you forget everything else I have said tonight, please remember what I am about to say now. Do you see that there is no way to be a true follower of God and still follow the inclinations of the natural heart?

There are many people who would like to be Christians if they could just feel right all the time. There are many people who would like to be Christians if they could feel happy. They would like to talk nice. They don't want to lose their temper. They want to kneel down and pray and never have any of those feelings again. They want to get up every morning as cheery as a thrush and sing. They would be willing.

But as they get up on the wrong side of the bed and fall down in the mouth, it shows up. They spread gloom everywhere they go. Why? They feel that way. They obey that impulse. As long as the impulse says a cigarette, they get a cigarette. As long as the impulse says a glass of whiskey, they get a glass of whiskey. So it is in this matter of lust. Millions of people today who see a member of the opposite sex they like set something in motion to try to get hold of that person. They look with the eyes and work to break down the barriers that God has erected to preserve purity.

There is no such thing as being a Christian without denying the natural inclinations and impulses that lead away from temperance and purity and integrity.

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" Galatians 5:24.

You can crucify the natural affections. You can say, No, I will not let my hands touch what doesn't belong to me. I will not let my eyes rove on what doesn't belong to me. And when you catch yourself longing to eat something you know is not good for you, you say to yourself, No, I will not touch that thing that I know is not good for my body. And when you feel gloomy and discouraged, instead of spreading gloom and despondency all around, by the grace of God say, Jesus is good. God is good, and I love Him. And instead of talking about how I feel, I am going to talk about how God is.

Our Father in heaven, we thank Thee for the Scriptures which show us the glorious path of success and the awful road to ruin. We pray that we shall be warned by the one and cheered by the other. Tonight inspire in every heart the certainty that we can be redeemed; that Jesus dies so we can be cleansed of all these unholy things, that we might learn to master every appetite and passion. Be kings and queens instead of slaves in bondage. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

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