

The Seduction of Sin – Judges 16:4-22

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Rebel Without A Cause*

1. In *Rebel Without A Cause* James Dean challenges a rival to a game of chicken.
2. They line up their cars side by side, toward the edge of a cliff a couple hundred yards ahead.
3. The chicken was the first guy to slam on his brakes.
4. But Dean had a plan; he wasn't going to use his brakes at all, he was going to just dive out of the car and let it plummet over the cliff.
5. As the two cars raced toward the edge, the other guy kept looking over, trying to outlast Dean, not realizing what was coming.
6. At the last second, Dean dove out of his car –
7. It was too late for the other guy to react, & in his rush to get out of his car, his jacket caught on the door handle & he fell to his death.

B. *OT Version*

1. What we're reading today is an OT version of a game of Chicken Samson played with sin.
2. And though he doesn't realize it, he's rushing quickly to the edge of ruin for he will be caught on his lust.
3. In this passage, it seems Samson is moving from *safety* to greater & greater danger till eventually he falls.
4. But really, these verses only chronicle *the tail end* of a lifelong race toward destruction.

C. *Our Purpose*

1. The NT tells us that the OT was written that we might learn from its examples.
2. As we read about Samson's end today, let's see what we can learn about the seduction of sin.
3. Let's see what *tactics* we can employ to defeat temptation.
4. Though the ruts Samson left are deep & wide, and many follow in his wake, *we don't have to*.
5. It's been said that those who fail the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.
6. Let's not make that mistake.

II. TEXT

A. V. 4

4 Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

1. The verse begins with “Afterward.”
 - a. After what? After vs. 1-3 where Samson saw a fine-looking prostitute in the Philistine city of Gaza & gave her some business.
 - b. When the people of Gaza found out he was there, they tried to ambush him.
 - c. But their plan back-fired & he made off with their city gates, planting them on a hill 4 miles away.
 - d. Realizing his visit to this immoral woman had placed him in grave danger, we would think he’d wise up and realize he needed to be more cautious.
 - e. But no! the very next verse tells us he’s once again **back** in enemy territory – the Valley of Sorek.
2. And what’s he doing there? Once again he’s falling for a Philistine woman!
 - a. I like what Jon Courson says about Samson;
 - b. He was a **he-man** with a **she-weakness**.
3. AS strong as he was when the Spirit of God came on him, he never mastered his lust.
 - a. He had a crippling weakness when it came to women.
 - b. And the sad thing is, he was never interested in **good girls**. He never showed a bit of attraction to Jewish women.
 - c. No; he was a sucker for Philistine women. He liked the **Phillies!**
 - d. Against the better advice of his parents, he’d married a Philistine woman in the border town of Timnah.
 - e. He visited the harlot in Gaza, & here he is in Sorek with yet another phillie.
4. As we saw last Wed., being called by God to be the deliverer of Israel, we can expect Samson to make an occasional visit to enemy territory.
 - a. He needs to scout out the enemy; to devise a strategy & discover their weaknesses.

- b. But that was NOT why he was there.
 - c. He wasn't there to **defeat** them; he was **consorting** with them.
 - d. He wasn't trying to discover & exploit **their** weaknesses; they were discovering & exploiting **his**.
5. Timnah, Gaza, & Sorek were all Philistine places.
- a. If he'd not been wandering around Sorek, he'd not have met Delilah.
 - b. If he'd not met Delilah, he'd never ended up in the rubble of a pagan temple.
6. Therein lies our first lesson in how to resist temptation – Don't even go there!
- a. Samson was weak when it came to lust.
 - b. Knowing that -- he ought to have **avoided** places where he would be tempted to sin.
 - c. Since the Philistines were an exceedingly immoral people, he ought to have known better than to wander in the streets of their cities.
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- d. Most of us have some area we struggle with; where temptation is strong and all too often we fail.
 - e. Be wise! Don't complicate matters by putting yourself in places & situations where temptation can overwhelm you.
 - 1) If you have a problem with gossip or being critical, don't step into the gaggle-circle at the break table at work.
 - 2) If you have a problem with debt, don't thumb through the latest issue of *Vogue* or *Gear* or *Architectural Digest*.
 - 3) If your struggle is diet, don't hang out at *Krispy Kreme*.
 - 4) If like Sammy your issue is lust, don't browse the lingerie ads.
 - f. If you play with fire, you're **going to** get burnt.
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7. Samson was called by God to be a Nazirite, someone specially consecrated to God.
- a. That calling was marked by 3 specific prohibitions that were aimed at reminding him he wasn't like everyone else.
 - b. He belonged to the Lord, with a mission of waiting on Him for his daily orders.
 - c. The 1st prohibition he was to observe was to drink no wine nor touch anything of the vine.
 - 1) Since wine & grapes were staples of the ancient Middle-

Eastern diet,

- 2) This aimed at reminding Samson that as God's man he was called to be careful about what he allowed INTO his life.
 - 3) Because what we allow IN has direct impact on what we give OUT.
 - d. The 2nd prohibition was against touching any dead body.
 - 1) This was to remind him that as he went about his daily life,
 - 2) He had to be **cautious & careful** to not get involved with anything that would render him unfit to be used by God.
 - e. The 3rd prohibition was to not have his hair cut.
 - 1) This would **identify** him to all who saw him as one who was consecrated to God.
8. So far in the story, Samson's managed to keep **only** this last part of his vow intact.
- a. But it's clear from all his actions that he has no real regard for his calling as a Judge of Israel.
 - b. He doesn't **care** to be identified as someone devoted to the Lord.
 - c. He's more devoted to his own pleasure.
 - d. And when it comes to his hair **or** his pleasure, he'll make the fateful, foolish choice for pleasure.
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9. So here's Samson, with 2 strikes as he steps to the plate in Sorek.
10. And pitching is a relief-phillie named Delilah.
- a. Her name means "bring low; to ruin."
 - b. That's exactly what she did to Samson.
11. Picture Sammy as he strolls into Sorek.
- a. There's Delilah standing in line at Moonbucks, waiting to order a double-espresso.
 - b. He gets in line behind her & says to himself, "Wow! Nice!"
 - c. To her he says, "Hey good-lookin', what's your name?"
 - d. She bats here long black lashes & says, "My name is '*I'm going to bring you down & ruin you, sucker!*' What's yours?"
 - e. Now, anyone with a lick of sense is going to say, "Ah, never mind."
 - f. But Sammy thinks he's invincible.
 - g. The rules that apply to everyone else don't apply to him.
12. The Bible says that believers are not to be unequally yoked to unbelievers. [1 Cor. 6:14]

- a. Paul says in 1 Cor 7 that Christians are to marry Christians.
 - 1) Let me say this as a word of pastoral advice –
 - 2) You single people – don't just take some guy's or gal's word for it that they're a Christian.
 - 3) They need to **demonstrate** a mature, stable walk with the Lord on their own before you hitch up with them.
- b. Listen; what can we expect from sinners? SIN!
 - 1) So why would a Christian date an unbeliever?
 - 2) Why would a Christian walk into the Valley of Sorek & hitch up with someone whose name is, "I'm going to use you & bring you pain & sorrow"?
 - 3) There's only one reason – like Samson, you think you're the exception & that you can get away with it without getting hurt.
 - 4) You can't, you won't. // Sammy didn't & neither will you.

B. V. 5

⁵ And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver."

1. Samson had been a thorn in the side of the Philistines for 20 years.
2. Their domination of Israel, which had lasted for 40 years & brought them much wealth, had ended when Samson arrived on the scene.
3. They'd tried to kill him several times, but every time **they'd** been the one's who come off on the wrong end, badly defeated.
4. Samson seemed protected by some kind of magical barrier that made their attacks nothing more than minor irritations to him.
5. And all it did was rile him up so that he whopped them badly.
6. As v. 5 **implies**, Samson wasn't some big strapping body-builder.
 - a. He was a normal looking guy whose strength was disproportionate to his size.
 - b. There was clearly some **secret** to his strength.
 - c. And the Philistine leaders offered to reward Delilah if she could discover it.

C. Vs. 6-9

6 So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength *lies*, and with what you may be bound to afflict you.”

1. She isn't even subtle about her intent!
2. She tells him straight out that she doesn't just want to know the secret of his strength- she wants to discover it *as a means to an end* – to make him weak; to *defeat* him.
3. Now, let's think about this: If Samson was thinking clearly, what *ought* he have done at this point?
 - a. He should have said, “I'm out of here!” And never come back.
 - b. I mean, she *tells him* her goal is his destruction.
 - c. He ought to have followed Joseph's example and skedaddled right out of there.
4. We read this and think, “Samson is a fool.”
5. But wait – are we any different??
 - a. Don't we do the same thing when *we're* tempted?
 - b. As we sit here today, we all understand that back of all temptation is a plan to destroy us.
 - c. But when we're BEING tempted, we somehow lose sight of that.
 - d. Just as Sammy did.
 - 1) Again, picture it! You can be sure that before Delilah popped the question she dolled herself up in her most alluring outfit from *Vitruvian Secret*.
 - 2) She painted on her most suggestive lips & eyes.
 - 3) She sprayed herself with some *Celsius Klein*.
 - 4) She lit some candles, waited till just the right moment, then said in a deep, sultry & suggestive voice, **“Please tell me where your great strength *lies*, and with what you may be bound to afflict you.”**
 - 5) Her tone *promises* a special reward if he will just give her what she wants.
 - 6) But it's an empty promise because her *real goal* is his demise.
6. When will *we* wake up & realize that *our* spiritual Delilah, the devil, doesn't want to bless or bring us anything good.
 - a. Back of every temptation is our demise.
 - b. Behind every enticement to sin is our ruin.

- c. At the heart of every baited attraction is a barbed hook waiting to catch & reel us in.
- 7. When Delilah bats her eyes at you, remember she wants to see you blind.

7 And Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.”

- 8. The ancient world put a lot of superstitious weight in numbers.
 - a. 7 was considered an especially potent number.
 - b. So when he said 7 bowstrings would confine him, Delilah thought she was on to something.
- 9. And bowstrings were extremely strong; they had to be to bend the ancient war-bow used in battle.

8 So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them.

- 10. How did she do this? Did he just stand there while she pranced around & tied him up?
- 11. Not likely. As we read on we see that Samson was asleep when she applied the answer he gave her.
- 12. It doesn't take a genius to figure out how she got him to fall asleep.
 - a. She gave him what he wanted.
 - b. Afterward, he fell asleep.
- 13. This is the real danger of temptation & sin.
 - a. There is a *moment* of pleasure. The Bible recognizes that. [Heb. 11:25]
 - b. But the pleasure always dissolves into pain & sorrow.
 - c. Cola is sweet to the tongue, but it dissolves enamel & destroys your teeth.
 - d. That wasn't meant as commentary on cola; it's an illustration of what sin does to our soul.

 - e. The great deceit in temptation is that there IS a pay-off, a brief flicker of pleasure.
 - f. The real effect of sin may take a while to manifest itself, & the *delay* is enough to deceive us.
 - g. Any fisherman will tell you that the fish who takes the bait runs with it.

- a. The sport of fishing is knowing how to *play* the fish;
 - b. To get it to take the bait, then reel it in.
 - c. The fisherman loves *best* the time between the bite & the net.
 - d. The fish lives with the delusion it can get away with the bait.
 - e. But the fishermen knows what's coming – Fish & chips!
14. Don't be deceived by the fact that it seems you've gotten away with sin.
- a. Don't think that just because you've managed to avoid capture *so far* that means you're safe.
 - b. The devil is just *playing you*, friend.
 - c. And he doesn't believe in catch & release.
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15. While Samson slept the slumber of a man sated with sin, Delilah tied him up.

⁹ Now men were lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

16. Some of the Philistines were in hiding, waiting to see if the bowstrings made him weak.

17. Delilah woke him with a cry of warning.

18. And at the word of alarm, he woke up & snapped the strings.

19. The guys who were in hiding saw the ease with which he broke the strings & realized that was *not* the way to weaken him.

20. So to his 2 strikes we can add 1 ball. The Count is now 1 & 3.

D. Vs. 10-12

¹⁰ Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with." ¹¹ So he said to her, "If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man." ¹² Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And men were lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.

1. Another ball; the count is now 2 & 2.
2. Delilah's not filling her role as relief pitcher too well.
3. She better get it together or she won't be signed next season.

E. Vs. 13-14

13 Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom"—

1. Whoa, Sammy! Hold on now. You're talking about your hair!
2. This is the only part of his vow he's not broken, & now he's beginning to fudge.
3. Samson had braided his hair into 7 long strands.
4. He said if these were attached to a loom, he'd lose his strength.

14 So she wove *it* tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, "The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom.

5. Ball 3. But this pitch was a close one, just a tad low and inside.
6. The count is full at 3 & 2. Here comes the payoff pitch.

F. Vs. 15-21

15 Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart *is* not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength *lies*." 16 And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, 17 that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I *have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.*"

1. This to me is the most amazing thing.
 - a. Samson KNOWS Delilah is trying to trap him.
 - b. 3 times now when he told her how to make him weak, she'd done it to him.
 - c. Yet here he actually tells her the real secret!
 - d. She says to him, "You don't love me! If you did then you'd tell

me → HOW TO KILL YOU!”

- e. And Samson’s reply is, “Okay, you’re right! Sorry honey. Here’s the real secret.”
2. The lesson is this: When we give in to temptation, it makes it easier to give in again, then again, and again.
 - a. We build up a moral and spiritual inertia that makes it easy to just keep going.
 - b. And eventually we get to the place where we can’t see straight anymore.
 - c. We lose our moral sense & believe any old lie the enemy tells us.
3. Delilah could tell by the way Samson answered that this was the real secret.
4. He was now a broken man – broken by her unrelenting assault on his moral weakness.

18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, “Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart.” So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. 19 Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And she said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!”

5. And now, some of the most tragic words, not just in the Bible but in all of literature . . .

So he awoke from his sleep, and said, “I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!” But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

6. In ch. 14 when Samson had broken the prohibition against the vine, nothing outward had happened. God was with him and he slew a lion.
7. Later when he broke the second prohibition against touching a dead body, again nothing outward happened. God was *still* with him & he killed a bunch of Philistines.
8. Because he’d gotten away with breaking his vow before, he thought he could get away with it again.

9. Samson has gone so far from God, he doesn't even know that God has now gone from him.

10. It's very important that everyone here who's running from God hear what I'm about to say.

a. God loves you and He will keep coming after you trying to persuade you to surrender to Him.

b. But there comes a point at which He will stop that pursuit.

c. You are a fool to resist God, and He will try to overwhelm your foolishness with His graciousness.

d. But God gave you a precious gift called CHOICE.

e. And if you resist long & hard enough – God will back off and let you be settled in your decision to reject Him.

f. At that point, your fate is sealed. There is no longer any hope for you.

g. If you do not come to faith while He pursues, you certainly WILL NOT when He stops pursuing.

g. There are people here today who are feeling that inner call to turn to Christ.

1) And while that call is present, you also know that it is *weaker* than it used to be.

2) If you KEEP resisting, who's to say that today is your last chance?

3) I'm not being dramatic – I'm being realistic.

11. When Samson broke the first part of his vow, God was gracious & stayed with him.

12. When he broke the second part, God was again gracious and remained.

13. Samson came to EXPECT God's grace – and awoke in Delilah's lap to find God's grace was no longer extended to him.

14. It's a dangerous, dangerous thing to **EXPECT** grace – for grace by its very nature is *undeserved*.

15. In just a moment, we're going to give you a chance to respond to God's gracious offer of forgiveness.

16. If you feel the tug of His Spirit on your heart, rejoice that the grace of God is *still with you* – but don't let it be just a cause for *one more delay*. Respond today!

21 Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze

fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.

17. They blinded Samson & stuck him in prison, where he performed a job that was usually done by an animal.
 18. That's what sin does; it blinds & reduces us to the level of brute beasts.
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19. This was the end Samson was headed for the moment he took his first step in the Valley of Sorek in v. 4.
 20. If he'd not taken that first step, he'd not have taken the last.

III. CONCLUSION

A. V. 22

1. As sorry as Samson's story is, this is not the end. Look at v. 22 . . .
22 However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.
2. It wasn't until Samson was blind that he began to *really see*.
3. His physical eyes had gotten him in trouble. His lust was his weakness.
4. So he lost his eyes & in his blindness he began to really see.
5. As his inner sight grew, so did his hair, and the awareness of his calling by God was renewed.

B. Steps

1. Maybe like Samson, you've come far down the path of temptation & sin.
 2. It's way past the *first steps* & you're now *deep* in the Valley of Sorek.
 3. Maybe you're living in Delilah's house, asleep in her bed with your hair woven into her loom.
 4. None of that matters if you will right now turn to God and ask Him to save you.
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5. Now, I mean this, not just for those who need to come to Christ *the first time*.
 6. I mean this for those who've *fallen away* and need to come back. Samson was a backslider!
 7. You may even be someone who's known by those around you as a mature Christian.
 - a. Like Samson, you may be counted as a leader among the people of God.

- b. But there's some hidden little Delilah you've been visiting,
some secret sin you've been pursuing.
- c. Get up & get out of her house.