

Discovery Hour
E 100, Week 6
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There is a very obvious pattern presented in the book of Judges, it is one of cycles in which the people fall away from their faith commitment, experience the consequences, cry out to God for help, receive the help, and then, sadly, start the cycle again. To wit: "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord ..." (Judges 2:10-11). This last phrase is repeated at Judges 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6. This has been referred to as the second generation syndrome and/ or as the spiritual law of entropy and some feel it can be observed not only in individuals but also in organizations like churches and schools as well as countries like our own. Another way this same idea is expressed is that God has no grandchildren, only children. This emphasizes the need every person has to be relationship with Christ.

Samson's life begins with great promise. His birth is foretold to his parents and he is set apart with the Nazarite vow. The Philistine's have been ruthlessly oppressing the Israelites and he is to be the one God uses to deliver his people. Sadly, in chapters 13, 14, and 15 we read of Samson and his relationships with foreign women which was forbidden for the Israelites. He takes a number of wrong turns and seems way off track from the purposes God called him to. Toward the end of chapter 15, things seem to be turning around for Samson. HE defeats a thousand Philistines. Though his own people finally hand him over to the Philistines toward the end of chapter 15, he is able by the Spirit of the Lord to defeat them. And then right at the end of the chapter we read that Samson led Israel for twenty years. That phrasing is the formula language the writer of the book uses to indicate the successful years of each of the judges. Now I'm sure when Samson began leading many in the land said, "Him?" "Isn't he the one with the problem with foreign women?" But as year passed to year, they surely became more and more confident in him and apparently those twenty years went quite well. But when we turn to the first two verses of chapter 16, we read the beginning of how Samson fell prey to sin again, after twenty years.

For me, this narrative contains haunting words, they occur in x, y, "one day," "One day?" After 20 years? One day? Samson's experience teaches us a VERY IMPORTANT lesson, which is that you've never arrived, you are never beyond the temptation to sin. Sin makes fools of us all. Sin makes fools of us all. We must not deny our own sinfulness and sinful tendencies. We must not deny them to ourselves or our God or to other people. Two, we must never expect that others have arrived either. And so, when those around us sin our response should not be "oh my did they really do that," but rather, "But for the grace of God, there go I"

It is true that the dominant chord in the life of Samson was squandered potential, but those were not the only notes played. There is also a minor chord played out in his life and that was simply this, despite

his foolishness and great sin, Samson was used greatly by God. In fact, he ends up fulfilling the purpose that God had designed for him from birth and it happens in a very interesting way. When God finds lemons, he makes lemonade, God can use us despite of our foolishness and sin. For Samson, this meant that despite his failure and sin God used him to begin the deliverance of the Israelites from the Philistines.

Discussion Questions

Second generation question

Are there any areas in your life where you are toying with sin?

It is amazing how God uses Samson at the end of his life. Do we have a misperception about later life, that it is about relaxing for the last 20 years? Should we change this?