



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Judges 16:1-31

“The Danger of Unconscious Decay”

TRANSCRIPT

[prayer removed from audio]

[Message] This is the fourth and final message of the series on Samson and we're turning to Judges, chapter 16, which is the last chapter of the Book of Judges that deals with the life of Samson. So will you turn there and listen as I read through Judges, chapter 16. The preceding chapter has concluded with a statement that Samson judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines, and we would gather then that this last event in Samson's life took place some time after he had begun his ministry as judge,

“Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. When it was told the Gazites, saying, "Samson has come here," they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. And they kept silent all night, saying, "Let us wait until the morning light, then we will kill him." Now Samson lay until midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts and pulled them up along with the bars; then he put them on his shoulder and carried them up to the top of the mountain which is opposite Hebron. After this it came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the

Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and see where his great strength lies and how we may overpower him that we may bind him to afflict him. Then we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver." So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength is and how you may be bound to afflict you." And Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh cords that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh cords that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. Now she had men lying in wait in an inner room. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he snapped the cords as a string of tow snaps when it touches fire. So his strength was not discovered. Then Delilah said to Samson, "Behold, you have deceived me and told me lies; now please tell me how you may be bound." And he said to her, "If they bind me tightly with new ropes which have not been used, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But the men were lying in wait in the inner room. But he snapped the ropes from his arms like a thread. Then Delilah said to Samson, "Up to now you have deceived me and told me lies; tell me how you may be bound." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my hair with the web [and fasten it with a pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his hair and wove them into the web]."

Incidentally, these words are not found in the Authorized Version, the last line or two, and the reason for that is that in the Hebrew text they're not found. However, in some of the versions of the Old Testament they are found and they have been inserted by those who have translated the New American Standard Bible thinking that they probably do belong here. The sense would be there even if the words are not genuine. Now we pick it up in the middle of verse 14,

"And she fastened it with the pin and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep and pulled out the pin of the loom and the web. Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have deceived me these three times and have not told me where your great strength is." And it came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death. So he told her all that was in his heart and said to her, "A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I shall become weak and be like any other man." When Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all that is in his heart." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. And she made him sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to afflict him, and his strength left him. And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him. Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he was a grinder in the prison. However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it was shaved off. Now the lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice, for they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hands." When the people saw him, they praised their god, for they said, "Our god has given our enemy into our hands, Even the destroyer of our country, Who has slain many of us." It so happened when they were in high spirits, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may amuse us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he entertained them. And they made him stand between the pillars."

Incidentally, the text here is not absolutely clear so far as the meaning is concerned, and it may simply be that they were entertained by having Samson there, that would have been entertainment enough for them. But it's also possible that what is meant by this is that they made him dance. I think of the ancient, the westerns in which the men who wear the black hats have the guns and the hero is without his and they come in the saloon and start firing at their feet and make them dance, and it may have been something like that or it may simply have been the fact that Samson was there and that was enough amusement for them. Particularly since his eyes were now gone. It was the custom of the Philistines incidentally, they were rather courteous and nice and cultured people, when they took captives they gouged out the eyeball, the complete eyeball. And so that's the picture that Samson made, it was a pitiable sight. That may have been enough for them. If you're in the cups enough, that would be amusement enough, no doubt. Now we read in verse 26,

"Then Samson said to the boy who was holding his hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them." Now the house was full of men and women, and all the lords of the Philistines were there. And about three thousand men and women were on the roof looking on while Samson was amusing them. Then Samson called to the Lord and said, "O Lord God."

Incidentally, you'll watch carefully the terms that are used for God here, and Samson uses three of them, he says, "O Lord" and the word is the word that speaks of God as the covenant keeping God. And then he uses the expression, "O Yahweh Adonay" and that's the word that speaks of him as the sovereign God, master. And then in a moment he will use the term, "God" which speaks of him as the strong God.

"O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and braced himself against them, the one with his right hand and the other with his left. (evidently to push them) And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he bent with all his might so that the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life. Then his brothers and all his father's household came down, and took him, and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. Thus he had judged Israel twenty years."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. This is the last in our series of studies in the life of Samson, and the subject for this morning is Samson's greatest hour, or from entanglement through enslavement to enshrinement. One cannot help but feel that Samson was one of the strangest saints of the Old Testament. He had great gifts, but his gifts were wasted by want and passion. There is no evidence that in Samson's life there was any great spiritual fervor. He took a Philistine for his wife in disobedience to the word of God. He often was stung by a personal injury and seemed to carry out some of his greatest exploits simply because he had been stung by personal injury. He was a man who was something of a joker and you can almost today hear his laughter at the hot tail that he gave to the jackals and the difficulties that he caused the Philistines.

And yet there was something about Samson's life that we must never forget if we are to understand him. Because in the midst of this man in which there was this mixture of grim humor and fierce hatred and, someone has said it resembles more the horse play of Homeric and Norse heroes than the stern purpose and righteous wrath of a soldier who felt that he was God's instrument. There was at his heart a basic devotion to Yahweh. It's difficult to see it. You would look at him and say, "What a strange champion for

Jehovah, the holy God of the Old Testament, to have.” But when you estimate the character of Samson, you need to remember this one thing he was a Nazarite from his mother’s womb. His mother and his father had honored that oath, and when Samson grew to maturity, he had honored that oath. He had never, up until this time, forgotten that he was a Nazarite to God. And so in the deepest recesses of his being there was that devotion to the Lord. He had not cut his hair. He had not drunk wine nor strong drink. And so basically, in spite of the many things that seem to say Samson is no servant of Jehovah at all, there was a basic devotion to the Lord God.

I said last time, and I repeat it again, that in our understanding of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, we need to construct our doctrine in such a way that we do not exclude from the family of the faithful, men like Lot and men like Samson, because the New Testament includes them. In this last chapter of Samson’s life there are two great lessons. There is the lesson of the danger of unconscious spiritual decay. The Bible says, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” And that pertains to the Christian as well as the non Christian.

Many years ago, I was teaching Hebrew in the theological seminary and we had a young man who graduated from a Christian college, I can still remember him. This was probably twenty-five years ago now. He sat right in front of me, seemed to be very interested in spiritual things. He had had a background in this Christian college, in the southeast. He attended the classes for weeks and then along around the middle of the semester his interests seemed to wane. It may have been associated with the difficulty of the Hebrew for him, but that was not really the primary problem. Finally in the spring semester he dropped out of the theological seminary. He dropped out of acquaintance with the men at the seminary and I still remember, not too many years ago, someone came to me here in Dallas and said, “Do you know so and so?” And I said, “Yes I do know him. How is he getting along?” Well he said, “He’s a business man in the city.” I asked, “How is his spiritual condition?” And this person, who had been thrown into

contact with him, said, “He doesn’t have any spiritual condition, he’s a mocker of the Christian faith.” And he had drifted from a Christian college, a Christian theological seminary, in the study of the word of God, until finally there was no evidence whatsoever of any spiritual experience at all.

I remember a young lady, a very vital young lady. She was in high school. A very beautiful young girl, you could not help but notice her because she was so beautiful, very interested in spiritual things, very active in Young Life. In fact, there were several other young girls who were attending the church because of her testimony. And she was an active, vigorous Christian, but she began to dally with sin. I happened to have some acquaintance with it, through a relationship with someone who knew, and also with her. She dallied with sin. Finally, she committed sin. Then she married a young man who was not a Christian, made what is according to Scripture an unholy alliance. And then a number of years later, I was in a certain city where she lives, and had an opportunity to renew acquaintance with her. And there was obvious indifference and lethargy to the things of the Spirit of God.

Samson’s life is a lesson in unconscious spiritual decay. It also is an illustration of the fact that while man may be a disgrace to the Lord, the grace of God often so overcomes and overwhelms us that in the end, he triumphs just by that grace. David in the 32nd Psalm sings of the greatness of the forgiveness of God. He says, in words cited in the New Testament in the 4th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven whose sin is covered. How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit.” David spoke that as a Christian man. He spoke that over God’s forgiveness of him because of his great sin. Mr. Spurgeon titles his sermon on this section, “Shaven and Shorn but Not Beyond Hope.” I think that is a lesson from this chapter in Samson’s life.

It opens with three verses about Samson’s visit to a harlot in Gaza and there’s no need to make any comment, in fact, comment here is as useless as sprinkling your lawn

during a rain storm. Evidently, Samson in bored with the holiness of judging Israel. Unwarned by his previous treachery, and the previous treachery of the Philistines, unmindful of the previous close calls, by the mercy of God, he indulges himself again in his favorite sin, “Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot.” There is a saying that the bigger a man’s head gets the easier it is to fill his shoes. No man is too big for God. And so Samson fell. And we read after this, “It came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.” This was a presumptuous abuse of the talents that God had given Samson, for he had given Samson great talents. There’s no question about it that he was a man of unusual gifts and abilities that God had given to him. And so again, he looks upon a Philistine woman. The text does not say he saw her, but you can almost add that, if you want to add something to the Bible, it surely must have been after this he went down to the valley of Sorek and he saw a woman and he loved her, her name was Delilah.

John Anderson, a pastor in the city here, in some words that he wrote not long ago, said that a fourth grader submitted a paper in his fourth grade class and these were the words that he said, “Ben Franklin was born in Boston and as soon as he had any sense he moved to Philadelphia. [Laughter] He was hungry and so he bought a loaf of bread. A girl who saw him with the loaf laughed at him. Then they got married and discovered electricity.” [Laughter] Well, the sparks flew when Samson looked upon Delilah, but they were not the kind of sparks that were good for Samson. For this siren from Sorek would ultimately be the means of the loss of his eyes.

Oliver Butterfield, who is a marriage counselor, was asked once, so John Anderson said, “Do you believe in love at first sight?” and he said, “Yes, but I always think it’s good to take a second look.” [Laughter] And that was Samson’s failure. He didn’t take a second look. And so he fell for this woman, Delilah. And as soon as he did, he was entangled. And the entanglement leads to enticement and finally to enslavement. In the



5th verse, when the Philistines heard about it, here was their another opportunity for them and so they came to Delilah and evidently, they knew Delilah’s weakness.

Now I’ll be very careful in what I say, because some of you occasionally write me little notes, and they’re very helpful too. [Laughter] Some of them are critical, and I appreciate the critical comments. I know you think I don’t, but I do appreciate the critical comments, because it does help me. And someone has said I’ve been a little too hard on the women recently. [Laughter] And I’m sorry, I do not intend in any way to suggest that women are anything other than my favorite sex, because they are. [Laughter]

Now Delilah was a woman who liked cash. It’s obvious. And evidently, the Philistine lords recognized that and so they come to her and say, “Entice Samson and try to find out where the secret of his great strength is and let us know and we’ll each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.” And you’ll remember in the latter part, when she has him in her hands, she says, “Be sure and bring the money.” So she was interested in that. And so Samson is now the object of the enticement of Delilah. She must have been a woman of great beauty. She certainly was a woman of intelligence. She certainly knew how to get next to Samson. And she certainly knew how to cause his fall. And so she came to him and she said, "Samson, please tell me where your great strength is and how you may be bound to afflict you."

Now it’s very interesting, this statement seems to imply that she, as well as the Philistines, believed that the secret of Samson’s strength was in something that he possessed, perhaps a magic charm, some amulet that he was wearing. Some secret piece of clothing or a secret piece of jewelry that no one could see, which would seem to indicate that Samson, outwardly was no, was just an ordinary looking man and was no giant after all. He certainly was not six feet nine and weighed two hundred and eighty-five pounds. Because then they would have said, “We know where his strength is.” But they did not understand where his strength was. Evidently he was just an ordinary looking man. And his name, which means something like little son, sunny, may have

been a real representation of what he looked like, just an ordinary little man. Maybe he was only five feet six and weighed a hundred and twenty-seven, instead of big. And so they wondered where this strength came from.

You know the ungodly always misunderstand the nature of spiritual strength. If they look at a church they frequently, if there is any spiritual power there at all, they will trace it to, well it's a lovely building, it's an attractive building. Or the minister is a very intellectual man, or he's a very fervent man, or he's a man who is very warm. Or it's because the people who attend are rather wealthy and they have influence in the community. Or perhaps they have a lovely choir and they sing beautifully. Or the organization is unusual, the organization is marvelous and it's because of that that God blesses. They never realize that the blessing of God does not depend upon these things, oh a crowd may gather, but we're talking about the blessing of God. We're talking about that which appears to be supernatural. The ungodly never understands the nature of spiritual strength because they're blind, they do not understand what it is. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they're foolishness to them. Neither can he know them because they're spiritually discerned. They do not realize that spiritual power depends upon relationship to the Lord, and obedience to his word, a desire to do his will, these are the things from which spiritual power flows. So try to find out his secret, what's he wearing? What's he got on? What's his trick? What's his thing?

Well Samson, he is a man who likes to play along, and unfortunately, this is where he was caught. And he said to Delilah, “Well, Delilah, if they bind me with seven fresh cords” incidentally, the fact that he says, “seven” gives it a touch of reality, because seven was a kind of spiritual number. It's a word that is the number of perfection, and is often used in connection with spiritual things. And so he said, “If they bind me with seven fresh cords that have not been dried, then I will become weak like any other man.”

And so you know the story, she provided him with them. She shouted out, “The Philistines are upon you!” and “he snapped the cords as a string of tow snaps when it

touches fire. So his strength was not discovered." And then after all she's thinking about those eleven hundred pieces of silver, and so she said, "Samson, you've deceived me, you've told me lies; now please tell me how you may be bound." He said, "Well if they bind me tightly with new ropes which have not been used," notice that, which have not been used. See there is something spiritual about that even, some trick about it, suggested. "Then I shall become weak and be like any other man." And the same thing happens and she's again disturbed with Samson and she says, "Up until now you've deceived me and told me lies, tell me how you may be bound." And he said to her, "If you weave" you'll notice he's getting closer and closer to the real secret of his strength, he's weakening under the guile of Delilah, "If you weave the seven locks of my hair with the web." So evidently in the warp of the weaver's machine, "If you take my seven locks and you make them the woof, if you just weave them into the machine, then I'll be like any other man." And so she did it, and she shouted out, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" and he awoke from his sleep and pulled out the pin of the loom in the web.

Now she said, "How can you say that you love me Samsey, [Laughter] when your heart is not with me? You've deceived me these three times and have not told me where your great strength is." And so you can hear her day after day, "Samsey, baby, please tell me [Laughter] where your strength lies." And finally he got so annoyed. This evidently, went on over a long period of time and finally he was so annoyed that he spilled the beans. And he said, "A razor has never come on my head. Delilah, when the other boys went in to the barber shop to get their hair cuts, I always asked for a nothing cut." "A nothing cut. What's a nothing cut?" she said. "Well that's nothing off the top, nothing off the back, nothing off the sides. And when they got razor cuts, I had none. A razor has never touched my hair. I am a Nazarite to God." And the fact that he mentioned "Nazarite to God," evidently was the thing that made her know that he had told her what was in his heart. He hadn't mentioned God up until this time. He had suggested some things that suggested spirituality, but now he says, "I'm a Nazarite to God."

Now mind you, this was rebellion on Samson’s part, because it was the despising of that which was the sign of his dedication to God. And so when the confession has been made, you can just see what went on in Delilah’s heart. She acted as if nothing had really been unfolded or revealed to her. But a few days later, having made contact with the Philistines and having told them that he’s told me all my heart, bring the money. She arranged for the final catastrophe that would mean Samson’s fall. She said, “Samson, your hair doesn’t look too good. I’ve got some new ointment. A little dab will do you.” [Laughter] Now I’m not sure this really happened this way you understand. [Laughter] But anyway, I can just imagine her saying, “Samson, will you come over and lie down on the sofa here and put your head in my lap, I want to style your hair.” And as she was playing with his hair, those seven beautiful locks that he had. Samson fell to sleep, and she called for the razor and she gave him an “everything cut,” [Laughter] and it was all cut off. And then she shouted out, “The Philistines are upon you!” and even Delilah is able to afflict him, which would seem to indicate that he was after all just a man who had an ordinary physique. And so when the Philistines come, Samson jumps up from the couch and says, “I’ll shake myself just like I have always in the past.” thinking that perhaps it’s just the drowsiness of having fallen to sleep that he feels, and the Scripture says those terrible words, “He did not know that the Lord had departed from him.” The hair was the symbol of dedication, but the lost hair meant rebellion against God and the loss of the dedication and the loss of power with God. Many a man has been lost in Delilah’s barber shop, in the lap of a vile vicious vixen.

I can still remember another young man, very active in Intervarsity Christian Fellowship then later married a Christian girl, active in a local church, a very fine local church. Then, as the years went by, women, drink, began to have their effects upon him, finally, a divorce. The last picture that the Christian friends of this young man, of whom I was one, had of this man was he was walking the streets of Dallas as a bum with a harlot on his arm.

Samson jumped up and he wist not, the Authorized Version says, “he wist not that the Lord had departed from him.” Now you know the same thing that happens to individuals may happen to churches. There are churches that performed a great work of God fifty years ago. Their former days were heroic, in their early days they were vital. The word of God was proclaimed with great power and vigor. There were many in the church who were faithful to the Lord, they studied the Scriptures. They were anxious to find out what does the New Testament say about the local church, and whatever it said meant that that was what they were to do. But now, they’ve become a different kind of church. They have ministers that are as polished as a new Cadillac, Seville. They have choirs that are able to sing very beautifully. The congregation appears to be a very lovely influential congregation. They’re very respectable, but if you were to ask them, “How many people have been baptized in profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus?” “Well we really haven’t used the baptistery much recently. Very few have come to know the Lord in that sense. But we have a beautiful organ, and we have a lovely choir. And our minister is very well educated and nice people attend our church. And the gospel is mentioned in the ministry of the word. In fact, we devote fifteen or sixteen minutes to it every Sunday morning.”

I would imagine that, after Samson had his hair cut, in the eyes of many people, both then and now, he would have looked a great deal better. And frequently when churches become respectable and have a lovely choir and are filled with respectable people we rather tend to think, if we don’t look carefully at the Bible, the church has improved considerably. But the more vital facts are, is the word of God proclaimed in power? Is there response through the Holy Spirit, are individuals brought face to face with the Lord Jesus through the preaching of the word? Are there people who are converted? Are the saints strengthened? Is the baptistery being used?

Many churches are shaven and shorn like Samson. And many individuals are too. What’s the answer? Well it’s back to the old gospel, for churches. God forbid that I

should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. No church will ever prosper which does not preach fervently, faithfully, without compromise, without excuse, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as forthrightly as possible. Maybe there are some rough edges in the presentation of it, but it is the message and the vitality that lies back of the message that converts. And God uses it.

What a pathetic sight for Samson. A God deserted man, nothing is worse. His strength is gone because the Lord is gone, and oh the deceitfulness of sin. He did not know that the Lord had departed from him. They were ignorant of the source of his strength, now Samson is ignorant of the source of his weakness. The man who has God knows it. The man who does not have God does not know it. Isn't that a strange thing? Isn't it a sad thing? It's even possible for you to be sitting in the audience and listening to what I'm saying and saying, "Yes, that's right Dr. Johnson, there are people like that." and not realize that it's you that the word of God has as its object. It's for you that Samson's life speaks.

Well, when the Philistines took hold of Samson, they gouged out his eyes. That was a, the Philistines were nice people. They were lovely people. They didn't just punch your eyes out. They thought that it was necessary to do a pretty good job. And so they gouged out the whole eyeball. That was the way they did it. And so Samson lost his eyes. Isn't that a ironic thing? What was it that had caused Samson such difficulty? Why it was his eyes. We read in chapter 14, verse 1, "Then Samson went down to Timnath and saw a woman." And we read in chapter 16, verse 1, "Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there and went in to her." The Lord Jesus said something that pertains to Samson, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." It's better for thee to enter into life maimed than to be lost and have your eye sight. Samson was better off blind than he was with his eyes, it would seem.

Milton has caught the spirit of Samson because they gouged his eyes out, they brought him down to Gaza, they bound him with bronze chains and he was a grinder in the prison. Milton says, as he describes him, “Eyeless, in Gaza, at the mill, with slaves.” Sin brings a man into slavery. He thinks that he’s free. He thinks that by indulging in his passions he’s free. He can do as he please. He likes this. Even some believers use this as a kind of excuse. And in an antinomian way, think that they can get away with their sins. But the man who sins is a man who becomes the slave. And the man outside of Christ is the greatest slave of all, but a Christian can be a slave too, slave to his passions, as Samson was. It was a humiliating slavery of sin. No freedom, what a brilliant disappointment, a splendid failure, a glorious shame. The sadness of the wasted talent of Samson is something to ponder.

I have no doubt that there are many of you in this audience who have great potential. Oh may God enable you to realize your potential. What a sad thing it is, I know, what a sad thing it is to arrive at your old age and think back, “Oh what I might have been, if the gifts that God had given me were truly used for his glory.” Fortunately, the grace of God is greater than all of our sin. And the glory of Samson is that in the final hours of his life, there was something that was vital there after all. We read, “Howbeit, or however,” in verse 22, “the hair of his head began to grow again after it was shaved off.” “Where there is life there is hope,” we say. And in Samson’s head there was still life. It’s rather interesting to me, and it may be true that it’s possible to argue that in Samson’s experience we have an illustration of eternal security. In the sense that Samson lost his, the glory of the rewards for his submission to the Lord through the earlier part of his life and also in his experience with Delilah, but there was still life there. “Howbeit, the hair of his head began to grow again.” No trips to Meullers for him.

You know the wicked are not wise either. You would think, what would you do, if you had Samson in your hands and you have now discovered the secret of his strength, what would you do? Would you allow his hair to grow again? Would you’ve reasoned,

“Why if we allow his hair to grow again we have him in our hands, he’ll just do a great deal more work than the rest of these slaves we have.” How foolish, why if I’d have Samson in my hands I would have assigned a special barber to him. [Laughter] And I would say, “Your duty is to cut his hair every morning, just run the razor over his head every morning before he has breakfast. Don’t promise him anything until he has his head shaved. And run your hand over it. Be sure it’s like Yule Brenner’s [Laughter] before he eats.” But the wicked are not wise. The Lord Jesus said that Christians as believers should be wise as serpents, and guileless as doves. And so they foolishly allowed Samson’s hair to grow.

Well we read that Samson, on the day that the Philistines were rejoicing over the fact that they had Samson, their enemy, in their hands who had destroyed their country, in the midst of their cups when they’d had just a few too many, somebody said, “Let’s bring Samson out and have a little fun.” And so there’s a little boy standing over nearby, I often wonder what happened to him, that little boy.

Many years ago when I preached on Samson first, I asked my daughter, “What about that little boy, Grace?” She said, “I’m sure that when he put his hand on those pillars he said, ‘Little boy, run out of here. Run for your life.’” But the Scripture doesn’t say anything about it. There was a little boy that led this man in, blind. And Samson, after he had amused the crowd for a while and they’d thrown their jibes and other things at him. Finally, perhaps feigning that he was weak and tired, he said, “Put my hands on the two pillars of the temple.” And it so happened they were close enough together for Samson to put his hand on the two pillars.

And then you see here what is basically the heart of Samson. Because when his hands are put on the pillars we read in verse 28, “And Samson called to the Lord and said, “Oh Yahweh, Oh great covenant keeping God, remember the promises to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, remember those promises that you have given. Oh Yahweh, Adonai, oh sovereign, faithful God of Israel, remember me, please remember me, please strengthen



me just this time, oh mighty God, faithful covenant keeping God, sovereign God, omnipotent God.” There’s a great deal of theology in Samson’s use of these three names for God. It suggests that there was a great deal of tension in his own spirit. And so he cries out, “Remember me just this once, in order that I may be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.” And you know, when prayer returns, strength returns. And he put his hand on those pillars and he began to push, and the power of the Nazarite dedication returned to him and the temple collapsed, and all of the lords of the Philistines died plus the three thousand that were on the roof making fun of Samson, so that the Scripture says that “the dead whom he killed in his death were more than those he killed in his life.”

The greatest victories were often the outcome of the greatest sacrifices and it was the life of Samson that brought his greatest victory. Samson was never really a Nazarite until this moment. He’d been so figuratively a Nazarite from his mother’s womb. He had honored that dedication through his life, but he had never really been a Nazarite in his spirit. But now, finally, in the last hour of his earthly life, Samson has given his life to the purpose of God. And in that, he finally became the Nazarite that God intended him to become.

Well it’s an interesting story, but the great lesson that comes out of it is the peril of unconscious spiritual decay. The prophet Hosea says, “Gray hairs are here and there upon him yet he (Ephraim) knoweth it not.” You know, that’s so beautiful a picture of spirituality in the saints. Three thousand years ago this happened. Three thousand years pass and suddenly, Samson’s here with us. The scene is much the same.

There are individuals in this audience whose spiritual condition may be the spiritual condition of Samson. You have truly believed in the Lord Jesus, but unconscious spiritual decay has set in. You don’t read the Bible anymore. You bring your Bible to church, but you haven’t really looked at it. You don’t study it at all. You’re not really anxious to find out what does God say in his word to me. As far as prayer is concerned, the only thing you do is occasionally offer up a petition, as you sit down to eat. There is

no real time at which you draw apart in your closet and cry out to God. There's no real time in which you get down on your knees and plead with God. You don't really know what it is to be so concerned over your own spiritual condition, your own sins, and backslidings, that you get down upon your knees and you cannot even utter anything but simply, "Oh God!" Meditation, no, we don't meditate on the Bible, we're indifferent. We're lethargic. There was a time when we were interested. There was a time when we were vital. There was a time when we were interested. We were concerned about our friends and our relatives, but now, no.

And as far as interests are concerned, it's my business that's my main interest. I'm interested in the things of God, but they're secondary. I wouldn't think of giving up an afternoon or two to the things of the Lord, if it meant that I had to cut corners in my business. My business is the necessity of my life, or my family, or my children.

Unconscious spiritual decay, "Prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love." Oh how we need Barnabas's warning that with purpose of heart we would cleave unto the Lord. May the Lord help us to realize that the things that happened in Gaza three thousand years ago are the things that are happening today, they're the things that are happening with us, in 1978. Our problem is the problem of unconscious spiritual decay. Believers Chapel shall suffer if we do not seek the face of God. I shall suffer if I do not seek the face of God. And I shall suffer not only now, but throughout all time.

There is no question about Samson's final place in the word of God. We do read in the Epistle to the Hebrews in the 11th chapter, "Time would fail me if I should speak of Gideon, Barak, and of Samson." The grace of God is mighty. It can cover even your unconscious spiritual decay. The Lord Jesus spoke to the church at Ephesus and he said, "You've left your first love. Now remember from whence you have fallen, and repent and do the first works," may God help us to do that. May God help us to realize just how far we may have fallen, may he help us to repent, may he help us to do the first works.

If you're here and you never have believed in the Lord Jesus, we remind you that Christ has suffered for sinners. The just for the unjust that he might bring us to God. And salvation is offered fully and freely through him. If you're here and you know your sin and your need, you may come and receive as a free gift, eternal life, through faith in the Son of God, may God help you to come. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We thank Thee Lord for the lessons that have come to us as we have pondered the life of Samson. Oh what potentialities, what opportunities, what talents and gifts, and oh the destruction wrought by spiritual decay. Lord, deliver us from similar decay. Oh God, if that decay has already taken place, we thank Thee for the hope expressed in the life of Samson. That his condition was not without hope and that by the grace of God, he finally became what he should have become from the beginning, a Nazarite to God. And oh God, we pray that as the Holy Spirit reveals to us our own spiritual lethargy and indifference, Lord let us not rest until we get by ourselves and go over the ways in which we have fallen and the depths to which we have fallen. And oh God, give us repentance and enable us by Thy spirit to do the first works, as individuals and as an assembly of saints. If there are some without Christ here, Lord we pray that they may come to him and know what it is to possess the life that is everlasting. For Jesus' sake. Amen.