

SERMON NOTES:

A Journey Through Judges and the Cost of Compromise

Part 9: The Loose Cannon

BIG Idea: God-given strength becomes dangerous when desire, anger, and impulse are not surrendered to God.

Application: Do not mistake gifting, opportunity, or even spiritual empowerment for spiritual maturity. Ask where God is calling you back before your strength becomes a weapon in the hands of your appetite.

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1. Even in the midst of compromise, God's mercy still sends a wake-up call.

Judges 13:1-25 (NLT)

¹ Again the Israelites did evil in the Lord's sight, so the Lord handed them over to the Philistines, who oppressed them for forty years.

² In those days a man named Manoah from the tribe of Dan lived in the town of Zorah. His wife was unable to become pregnant, and they had no children. ³ The angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and said, "Even though you have been unable to have children, you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son. ⁴ So be careful; you must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food. ⁵ You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and his hair must never be cut. For he will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. He will begin to rescue Israel from the Philistines."

⁶ The woman ran and told her husband, "A man of God appeared to me! He looked like one of God's angels, terrifying to see. I didn't ask where he was from, and he didn't tell me his name. ⁷ But he told me, 'You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food. For your son will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from the moment of his birth until the day of his death.'"

⁸ Then Manoah prayed to the Lord, saying, "Lord, please let the man of God come back to us again and give us more instructions about this son who is to be born."

⁹ God answered Manoah's prayer, and the angel of God appeared once again to his wife as she was sitting in the field. But her husband, Manoah, was not with her. ¹⁰ So she quickly ran and told her husband, "The man who appeared to me the other day is here again!"

¹¹ Manoah ran back with his wife and asked, "Are you the man who spoke to my wife the other day?"

"Yes," he replied, "I am."

¹² So Manoah asked him, "When your words come true, what kind of rules should govern the boy's life and work?"

¹³ The angel of the Lord replied, “Be sure your wife follows the instructions I gave her. ¹⁴ She must not eat grapes or raisins, drink wine or any other alcoholic drink, or eat any forbidden food.”

¹⁵ Then Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, “Please stay here until we can prepare a young goat for you to eat.”

¹⁶ “I will stay,” the angel of the Lord replied, “but I will not eat anything. However, you may prepare a burnt offering as a sacrifice to the Lord.” (Manoah didn’t realize it was the angel of the Lord.)

¹⁷ Then Manoah asked the angel of the Lord, “What is your name? For when all this comes true, we want to honor you.”

¹⁸ “Why do you ask my name?” the angel of the Lord replied. “It is too wonderful for you to understand.”

¹⁹ Then Manoah took a young goat and a grain offering and offered it on a rock as a sacrifice to the Lord. And as Manoah and his wife watched, the Lord did an amazing thing. ²⁰ As the flames from the altar shot up toward the sky, the angel of the Lord ascended in the fire. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell with their faces to the ground.

²¹ The angel did not appear again to Manoah and his wife. Manoah finally realized it was the angel of the Lord, ²² and he said to his wife, “We will certainly die, for we have seen God!”

²³ But his wife said, “If the Lord were going to kill us, he wouldn’t have accepted our burnt offering and grain offering. He wouldn’t have appeared to us and told us this wonderful thing and done these miracles.”

²⁴ When her son was born, she named him Samson. And the Lord blessed him as he grew up. ²⁵ And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him while he lived in Mahaneh-dan, which is located between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol.

“Again the Israelites did evil in the Lord’s sight...”

Compromise does not only lead us to bondage. Given enough time, and compromise can teach us to stop wanting deliverance at all.

Romans 5:8 (NLT)

⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us **while we were still sinners.**

1 Peter 2:9b (NLT)

⁹ ...for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for **he called you out of the darkness** into his wonderful light.

Romans 12:2 (NLT)

² Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Sometimes the most dangerous compromise is not the thing we are fighting. It is the thing we have stopped fighting.

2. When passion replaces discernment, desire starts pulling calling off course.

Judges 14:1-25 (NLT) *Samson's Riddle*

¹ One day when Samson was in Timnah, one of the Philistine women caught his eye. ² When he returned home, he told his father and mother, "A young Philistine woman in Timnah caught my eye. I want to marry her. Get her for me."

³ His father and mother objected. "Isn't there even one woman in our tribe or among all the Israelites you could marry?" they asked. "Why must you go to the pagan Philistines to find a wife?"

But Samson told his father, "Get her for me! She looks good to me." ⁴ His father and mother didn't realize the Lord was at work in this, creating an opportunity to work against the Philistines, who ruled over Israel at that time.

⁵ As Samson and his parents were going down to Timnah, a young lion suddenly attacked Samson near the vineyards of Timnah. ⁶ At that moment the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him, and he ripped the lion's jaws apart with his bare hands. He did it as easily as if it were a young goat. But he didn't tell his father or mother about it. ⁷ When Samson arrived in Timnah, he talked with the woman and was very pleased with her.

⁸ Later, when he returned to Timnah for the wedding, he turned off the path to look at the carcass of the lion. And he found that a swarm of bees had made some honey in the carcass. ⁹ He scooped some of the honey into his hands and ate it along the way. He also gave some to his father and mother, and they ate it. But he didn't tell them he had taken the honey from the carcass of the lion.

¹⁰ As his father was making final arrangements for the marriage, Samson threw a party at Timnah, as was the custom for elite young men. ¹¹ When the bride's parents saw him, they selected thirty young men from the town to be his companions.

¹² Samson said to them, "Let me tell you a riddle. If you solve my riddle during these seven days of the celebration, I will give you thirty fine linen robes and thirty sets of festive clothing. ¹³ But if you can't solve it, then you must give me thirty fine linen robes and thirty sets of festive clothing."

"All right," they agreed, "let's hear your riddle."

¹⁴ So he said:

"Out of the one who eats came something to eat;
out of the strong came something sweet."

Three days later they were still trying to figure it out. ¹⁵ On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband to explain the riddle for us, or we will burn down your father's house with you in it. Did you invite us to this party just to make us poor?"

¹⁶ So Samson's wife came to him in tears and said, "You don't love me; you hate me! You have given my people a riddle, but you haven't told me the answer."

“I haven’t even given the answer to my father or mother,” he replied. “Why should I tell you?” ¹⁷ So she cried whenever she was with him and kept it up for the rest of the celebration. At last, on the seventh day he told her the answer because she was tormenting him with her nagging. Then she explained the riddle to the young men.

¹⁸ So before sunset of the seventh day, the men of the town came to Samson with their answer:

“What is sweeter than honey?
What is stronger than a lion?”

Samson replied, “If you hadn’t plowed with my heifer, you wouldn’t have solved my riddle!”

¹⁹ Then the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him. He went down to the town of Ashkelon, killed thirty men, took their belongings, and gave their clothing to the men who had solved his riddle. But Samson was furious about what had happened, and he went back home to live with his father and mother. ²⁰ So his wife was given in marriage to the man who had been Samson’s best man at the wedding.

James 1:14-15 (NLT)

¹⁴ Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. ¹⁵ These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

Desire is not neutral when it becomes lord in our lives.

Calling is not character. Gifting is not maturity. Church attendance is not the same as discipleship.

3. Winning the fight is not the same as walking in the Spirit.

Judges 15:1-17 (NLT) *Samson’s Vengeance on the Philistines*

¹ Later on, during the wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat as a present to his wife. He said, “I’m going into my wife’s room to sleep with her,” but her father wouldn’t let him in.

² “I truly thought you must hate her,” her father explained, “so I gave her in marriage to your best man. But look, her younger sister is even more beautiful than she is. Marry her instead.”

³ Samson said, “This time I cannot be blamed for everything I am going to do to you Philistines.” ⁴ Then he went out and caught 300 foxes. He tied their tails together in pairs, and he fastened a torch to each pair of tails. ⁵ Then he lit the torches and let the foxes run through the grain fields of the Philistines. He burned all their grain to the ground, including the sheaves and the uncut grain. He also destroyed their vineyards and olive groves.

⁶ “Who did this?” the Philistines demanded.

“Samson,” was the reply, “because his father-in-law from Timnah gave Samson’s wife to be married to his best man.” So the Philistines went and got the woman and her father and burned them to death.

⁷ “Because you did this,” Samson vowed, “I won’t rest until I take my revenge on you!” ⁸ So he attacked the Philistines with great fury and killed many of them. Then he went to live in a cave in the rock of Etam.

⁹The Philistines retaliated by setting up camp in Judah and spreading out near the town of Lehi. ¹⁰The men of Judah asked the Philistines, “Why are you attacking us?”

The Philistines replied, “We’ve come to capture Samson. We’ve come to pay him back for what he did to us.”

¹¹So 3,000 men of Judah went down to get Samson at the cave in the rock of Etam. They said to Samson, “Don’t you realize the Philistines rule over us? What are you doing to us?”

But Samson replied, “I only did to them what they did to me.”

¹²But the men of Judah told him, “We have come to tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines.”

“All right,” Samson said. “But promise that you won’t kill me yourselves.”

¹³“We will only tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines,” they replied. “We won’t kill you.” So they tied him up with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

¹⁴As Samson arrived at Lehi, the Philistines came shouting in triumph. But the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon Samson, and he snapped the ropes on his arms as if they were burnt strands of flax, and they fell from his wrists. ¹⁵Then he found the jawbone of a recently killed donkey. He picked it up and killed 1,000 Philistines with it. ¹⁶Then Samson said,

“With the jawbone of a donkey,
I’ve piled them in heaps!
With the jawbone of a donkey,
I’ve killed a thousand men!”

¹⁷When he finished his boasting, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was named Jawbone Hill.

Strong enough to win, but not surrendered enough to be ruled by God.

Proverbs 16:32 (NLT)

³²Better to be patient than powerful;
better to have self-control than to conquer a city.

Strength without surrender is dangerous.

The question is not only, “*Did I win?*” The question is, “*What kind of person am I becoming while I win?*”

4. When you reach the end of yourself, call on the God who called you first.

Judges 15:18-20 (NLT)

¹⁸Samson was now very thirsty, and he cried out to the Lord, “You have accomplished this great victory by the strength of your servant. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of these pagans?” ¹⁹So God caused water to gush out of a hollow in the ground at Lehi, and Samson was revived as he drank. Then he named that place “The Spring of the One Who Cried Out,” and it is still in Lehi to this day.

²⁰Samson judged Israel for twenty years during the period when the Philistines dominated the land.

John 7:37b-38 (NLT)

³⁷ ...Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! ³⁸ Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'"