

Unwise Decisions Lead to Unwise Decisions
Judges 14
Notes

Failure to consult God regularly leads to a series of unwise decisions that can negatively impact our lives

I. INTRODUCTION

During the Battle of the Wilderness in the Civil War, Union general John Sedgwick was inspecting his troops. At one point he came to a parapet, over which he gazed out in the direction of the enemy. His officers suggested that this was unwise and perhaps he ought to duck while passing the parapet. "Nonsense," snapped the general. "They couldn't hit an elephant at this dist--." A moment later Sedgwick fell to the ground, fatally wounded.

I have found that without intervention, unwise decisions lead to more unwise decisions.

The older I get the more I realize the reason for the unwise decisions is a failure to consult the Lord throughout the course of life.

I can tell you. I can look back at every single major mess up and sin in my life and I can humbly and confidently tell you they took place because I either failed to go to the Lord for advice or I failed to go to the Lord in my time of temptation.

It does not take many unwise decisions to negatively impact your life.

Today, as we continue to follow the story of the last judge, Samson, we will see how unwise decisions lead to more unwise decisions.

In Samson's story I want to encourage us to see ourselves. It is easy to be removed from a situation and say what we would or would not do. I want to ask us to recognize our own times of foolishness and sin.

I also want you to see that even in Samson's foolishness and his sin, God was there redeeming him for his purposes and his glory.

I hope you heard what I just said. God can redeem your unwise decisions and your sin for his purposes and his glory. The way that takes place in your life is turning to Christ.

May this story help us turn to Christ today.

II. Lustful Desire Vs. Sound Advice (1-3)

Then Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines. ² So he came back and told his father and mother, "I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife." ³ Then his father and his mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she looks good to me."

From the end of Chapter 13 to the opening of Chapter 14 we see Samson has gone from being born to now a full-grown adult.

The author does not give us many details, but what he does tell us shocks us as we see once again the impact that the pagan culture has on the life of Israel.

Samson thought nothing of going to the place where the Philistines lived and finding a wife. The reason this was prohibited is that God, at this time, desired Israel to live and flourish within the nation and not to pollute the nation with the foreign false gods of the Philistines.

Throughout the life of Samson, we will see how his lustful eyes cause him much pain and heartache.

Samson is by far the most flawed judge in the book. He is violent, impulsive, sexually addicted, and emotionally immature.

Look what happens. Samson goes somewhere he didn't need to go, he sees something he doesn't need to see, he makes a decision he doesn't need to make, he doesn't take advice he needs to take, and he gets in trouble when he doesn't need to get in trouble.

His parents no doubt remember that God told them Samson would deliver Israel from the Philistines, now he wants to marry one!

Samson's parents encourage him to find a wife from the circumcised of Israel. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant with God. This was not a racial issue; this was a covenant issue. God's people are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

Instead of listening to sound advice Samson allows his lustful desires to rule his mind and heart.

Samson fell victim to the common problem of will vs. desire.

Throughout your life your flesh will desire unhealthy, sinful, prideful, lustful, and greedy things. Your will is going to wage a war against your desire in order for you not to give into the sinful nature.

This is the situation we find ourselves in within our culture right now. Everything the culture is pushing is telling us it is completely acceptable to allow each and every desire its full potential, and that anyone who tells you otherwise is a bigot.

From this we have observed the passage of gay marriage, the rise of transgender rights, the pushing of sex culture on children as young as 5.

Now there is a case being made that pedophilia should be an acceptable lifestyle in the culture. People are marrying ghosts, their pets, and I even saw one young man in the Northeast go to court to marry his mother.

You will say, those are extreme cases. They might be, but they are prime examples of what happens when a culture is ruled by lust instead of wisdom and restraint.

You will have temptation to sin in your life, there is no getting around that. We still live in a fallen world and the effects of sin are still prevalent in our lives.

What about you? What desires are trying to rule your life right now? Have you found yourself entertaining them in your mind? On the drive to work? While you watch television? When you lie down at night?

Beloved, do not allow these desires to live long in your mind.

You will have to decide whether to give into the lusts of the flesh which lead to death or to submit your desires to Christ and rely on the sound advice of the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to defeat temptation.

III. God's Plan Vs. Our Sin (4-9)

*⁴ However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel. ⁵ Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came as far as the vineyards of Timnah; and behold, a young lion came roaring toward him. ⁶ The Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a young goat though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done. ⁷ So he went down and talked to the woman; and **she looked good to Samson.** ⁸ When he returned later to take her, he turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion; and behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion. ⁹ So he scraped the honey into his hands and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them and they ate it; but he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey out of the body of the lion.*

Have you ever done something you knew was shady, or not completely well done and were surprised the results turned out better than expected?

This is the situation we find here in verses 4-9. The author lets us know that the Lord was using Samson and his lust for his glory.

The two nations were so intertwined, Israel was being swallowed up and losing its identity.

God would use Samson's sin to cause a blood feud between the nations which would lead to Israel separating from the Philistines and regaining their identity.

We must always remember that God is righteous and just. He can and will use both the sinful and the righteous to enact his judgment against sin.

He does this with Samson's lust. He uses Samson's lust to accomplish judgment on the Philistines.

On the way to pick up this woman he met a lion attacks him and the Spirit of God fills him, and he kills the lion.

Notice in verse 7 the words “she looked good to Samson.” Samson was ruled by the lust of his eyes. He was a man who tried to satisfy his flesh and in the end of his story we will see it cost him his life.

If we allow our eyes or our passions to rule us, we will suffer. The desires of the flesh are to glorify the flesh, to idolize the flesh. God will not tolerate idols in the life of his children.

God will bring to ruin the false idols in our lives to bring us back to himself. You may be here this morning and you know exactly what I am talking about. You have made an idol of your passions and desires, and you find yourself ruled by them.

Why are you continuing to do that which you know is wrong? Why are you continuing in a sinful habit or lifestyle that you know will lead to results that will hurt you?

Some time has passed from Samson’s proposal to the woman. On his trip back home, he sees the dead lion he killed earlier. Bees apparently made a hive in the carcass and Samson scoops out some of the honey for himself and he gives some to his parents.

But there is a problem here. Samson is a Nazarite and as a Nazarite he is not supposed to touch a dead body. Again, we see Samson’s eyes, lusts, and passions causing him to violate God’s rule for his life.

God has a plan for Samson; to use him for his glory, but Samson continually turns aside from God’s plan and allows his flesh to rule.

What about you? Is your sin keeping you from being used as effectively as God could use you?

God does not need us for his plan, but he chooses to use sinful men and women to show his grace.

IV. Reason Vs. Riddles (10-14)

¹⁰ Then his father went down to the woman; and Samson made a feast there, for the young men customarily did this. ¹¹ When they saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him. ¹² Then Samson said to them, “Let me now propound a riddle to you; if you will indeed tell it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes. ¹³ But if you are unable to tell me, then you shall give me thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes.” And they said to him, “Propound your riddle, that we may hear it.” ¹⁴ So he said to them, “Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet.” But they could not tell the riddle in three days.

Now the scene shifts to the pre-wedding or engagement feast. Samson has the prize of his lust, the Philistine woman, and now he wants not sex, but material possessions.

He uses a riddle to which only he knows the answer to trick the Philistine men into providing him wealth.

Samson is using dishonest means to acquire wealth he doesn't need for a marriage he isn't supposed to be in.

He is doing the best he can to justify his sinfulness and increase his own status in his eyes and those around him.

He doesn't know he is in trouble, and he is just making it worse.

We can chew gum, blow bubbles with it, even use it as a sticky adhesive if we're desperate. But unwise people make a mess of gum, like the little girl who stuck it in her hair. At first, she tried pulling it out. Then rubbing it out. When that didn't work, she tried shampooing it out. But her best efforts only made matters worse. By the time she finally told her parents, it looked like a small rodent had built a nest on the side of her head. It took her father an hour—working with a special solvent—to finally rid her of the gum. When it was all over, there was just a little solvent left in the bottle. The little girl exclaimed, "Oh, good! Now we have some left in case it happens again!" Sometimes, we just don't "get it"!

We all make a mess of things when we lean on our own understanding. And it only gets worse when we don't learn from the messes we create.

Samson tried to use riddles to advance his sinfulness. We are called to holiness. Let us, as followers of Jesus, use our gifts and talents for his glory and not use them to promote our own sin.

V. Deception Vs. Dependability (15-20)

¹⁵ Then it came about on the fourth day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, so that he will tell us the riddle, or we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us to impoverish us? Is this not so?" ¹⁶ Samson's wife wept before him and said, "You only hate me, and you do not love me; you have propounded a riddle to the sons of my people, and have not told it to me." And he said to her, "Behold, I have not told it to my father or mother; so should I tell you?" ¹⁷ However she wept before him seven days while their feast lasted. And on the seventh day he told her because she pressed him so hard. She then told the riddle to the sons of her people. ¹⁸ So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, "What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?" And he said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have found out my riddle." ¹⁹ Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of them and took their spoil and gave the changes of clothes to those who told the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house. ²⁰ But Samson's wife was given to his companion who had been his friend.

The engagement feast lasted 7 days and on the seventh day the marriage was consummated.

The price of 30 garments was expensive and these Philistine men did not want to pony up the merchandise, so they threatened Samson's fiancé to get the answer.

At first Samson refused, but then after a week of crying and begging, Samson gives her the answer, knowing she is going to tell it to the Philistines.

His relationship with this woman is endemic of how sin works in our lives. First the woman enticed Samson (14:1), then she controlled him, (14:17), then she betrays him (14:17).

This is exactly how sin takes place in our lives.

Sin deceives us in order to control us.

It is interesting to think that Samson can kill lions and break ropes, but he can't overcome a woman's tears.

The Philistines answer Samson's riddle and he accuses them of cheating. Honoring his agreement, he travels twenty miles away to Ashkelon to kill 30 men.

Samson is so angry he does not even consummate his marriage but kills these men and then goes back home to his parents' house.

While he was gone away, his would be father-in-law gives his bride to be away to his best man. We will see how this plays out next week.

Throughout this entire episode from the very first verse to the last we see a man who is ruled by sinful passions which lead to unwise decisions that lead to unwise decisions.

It would be enough if Samson was the one who suffered these initial consequences, but Samson's selfishness, pride, and lust led others to suffer consequences.

Has your sin ever caused harm to someone else? Sure, it has. If you say "no" then you don't understand the nature of man or sin.

Since we are built to be in relationship with others, our sin has an impact in the lives of those we share relationships.

What about you this morning? Are you allowing sin to deceive you? Are you noticing unrepentant sin having an impact on your life in ways you did not anticipate?

We don't need to deceive ourselves into thinking our sin, no matter how small it may seem stays to itself. Sin finds a way to invade our lives more than we want it to and impact our lives more than we anticipate it will.

Turn to Christ and experience the freedom from sin. Instead of deceiving you, Christ is dependable in his promise.

Would you allow Christ to give you the power to overcome sin today?

Jesus promises to free you from sin and to offer power to overcome sin.

VI. CONCLUSION

Behind the scenes of an Arizona circus, Bobb Biehl started chatting with a man who trains animals for Hollywood movies: " 'How is it that you can stake down a ten-ton elephant with the same size stake that you use for this little fellow?' Pointing to a baby elephant who weighed three hundred pounds.

" 'It's easy ... ' the trainer said. 'When they are babies, we stake them down. They try to tug away from the stake maybe ten thousand times before they realize that they can't possibly get away. At that point, their 'elephant memory' takes over and they remember for the rest of their lives that they can't get away from the stake.'

Humans are sometimes like elephants. Something in our past can cause us so much grief, so much pain, so much anger, or so much fear that it literally paralyzes us from ever reaching our full potential in Christ.

"Today you are an adult capable of much more than you realize. You are far more capable in Christ than you were even twelve months ago, and next year you will be able to do things for the glory of God you can't imagine doing today."

Maybe you have made some pretty poor and unwise decisions in the past. Maybe you have allowed those past bad decisions to lead you to think that you can only make bad decisions.

You have sinned and this sin has brought you shame and guilt. You have found yourself in a pattern of sin that just keeps birthing sin. You don't know if you can do anything other than make bad decisions.

I am here to tell you that in yourself you can't. I know, I have tried many times to fix things in my own strength and my own wisdom only to fail every single time.

I want to encourage to turn to Christ. Whether you are turning to him for the first time or the ten-thousandth time, turn to him.

He desires you to turn to him. He had done everything needed for you to turn to him.

His grace is here to conquer your past, your bad decisions, and your sin.

There is salvation, there is freedom in Christ.

I want to encourage you to allow the Spirit of God and the Word of God to minister in your heart.

As Jesus is drawing near to you, draw near to him.