



# INFATUATION BLUES

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Judges 14:1-20  
Thirteenth Message  
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Our study this morning on the life of Samson, from chapter 14 of the book of Judges, deals with a case of falling in love, what I call the “infatuation blues.”

Country and western singer Patty Loveless sings these words in one of her hit songs:

The right time, the right place,  
The right body, the right face.  
Timber! I'm falling in love!

It started slow, it's coming fast,  
I gotta feeling, its gonna last.  
Timber! I'm falling in love!

You're so pretty, you look so sweet,  
Your love is sweeping me off my feet.  
You're the only one I'm dreaming of,  
I can't believe that I'm falling in love.

Who knows how love starts,  
I woke up with you in my heart.  
Timber! I'm falling in love!

## I. The Temptation (14:1-4) — “I saw a woman in Timnah”

**Then Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines. 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.” 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.” 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.** (NASB)

Samson had a problem with lust. He saw a Philistine woman in Timnah who looked good to him and he told his parents to get her for him. He acted on his desires. This story is probably the ultimate example of what the Bible calls the “lust of the eyes.” In the Garden of Eden, Eve “saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes” (Gen. 3:6). Our eyes stimulate our desires. We see something, we are tempted, and we want to possess it. I can be walking through the men’s department at Nordstrom and suddenly something will catch my eye. I am drawn like a magnet and I want it. And at times, I don’t just want one thing, I want one of everything in the store.

Samson saw the Philistine woman and she looked “right” in his eyes. This is the literal meaning of the

phrase, “she looks good to me.” This, too, is what the song says, isn’t it? “The right time, the right place, the right body, the right face.” The word “right” here is the same word that is used in the theme verse of Judges: “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes” (17:6). Compare this verse with the words of Deuteronomy 6:18, “You shall do what is right and good in the sight (eyes) of the LORD, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the Lord swore to give your fathers.” This word “right” is used of straightness, of uprightness. When we do what is “right” in our own eyes as opposed to what is “right” in the eyes of the Lord, then we have changed the standard. We have veered away from the directions which God has given to us.

There is a second sin involved here. Samson sought to marry outside the covenant family. God was very clear about this matter in his instructions to Israel: they were not to marry outside the nation. Marriage itself was not the problem — a Nazirite could marry — the problem was intermarriage. The Philistines used intermarriage, assimilating the Israelites into their culture, as a way of dominating and controlling the nation. The woman at Timnah was a daughter of the uncircumcised Philistines. Marrying into that society involved marrying into their religion, their gods and their worship. Samson, a Nazirite, was set apart by God to deliver Israel from the Philistines who had enslaved the nation for 40 years, but this deliverance was at risk due to Samson’s own personal desires. He was rejecting both the authority of God and the wisdom of his parents.

There is an interesting phrase in verse 4: “He [the LORD] was seeking an occasion against the Philistines.” God did not direct Samson to disobey, but, at the same time, he was not about to abandon his program because of Samson’s sin. God’s sovereignty overruled Samson’s choices. God overrules evil with good. This does not grant us freedom to do what we want to do, of course, trusting that God will over-rule if need be, but it does demonstrate that God can use even our mistakes for his glory.

## II. The Lion and the Honey (14:5-9)

**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. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a kid though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done. So he went down and talked to the woman; and she looked good to Samson. 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. 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.

As he was walking down to Timnah, Samson came upon a lion. The Spirit of the Lord rushed upon the Nazirite, and with his bare hands he tore apart the predator. In this first reference to Samson's strength, God was showing our hero that his strength lay with him. God was demonstrating to him that he could deliver Israel and break the chains of the Philistine rule, but Samson did not see this. The lion here may represent the devil. Peter reminds us that "the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). But, God's strength can defeat this lion. As was the case with Samson, at times the lion rushes at us and we do not have time to think. On such occasions we are forced to trust in God's strength, not our own.

However, and here is yet another instance of his sin, Samson did not tell his mother and father about the lion. Later, we will see that although he withheld this information from his parents, he told his wife. Samson handled a carcass, violating his Nazirite vow. And he gave honey to his mother and father, thereby involving them in his sin. Samson had his eyes on one thing and one thing only.

### III. The Feast and the Riddle (14:10-14)

Then his father went down to the woman; and Samson made a feast there, for the young men customarily did this. And it came about when they saw him that they brought thirty companions to be with him. 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. 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." 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.**

Samson became a party animal. He made a feast for the Philistines, assimilating with them instead of remaining separate from them. And he probably drank wine, in violation of his vow.

Selfish ambition was his sin here. He propounded a riddle, hoping to gain thirty changes of clothes. The garments mentioned here were very expensive — and the riddle would be impossible to solve. It could only be known by him. He thought he was betting on a sure thing, hardly the proposal of a Spirit-led man.

### IV. The Deceit of His Wife (14:15-20)

Then it came about on the fourth day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, that he may tell us the riddle, lest we burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us to impoverish us? Is this not so?" And 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?" However she wept before him seven days while their feast lasted. And it came about on the seventh day that he told her because she pressed him so hard. She then told the riddle to the sons of her people. 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."**

**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. But Samson's wife was given to his companion who had been his friend.**

So much for the sure thing! His wife's family threatened her life and the life of her father. Nice family! When you marry someone, you also marry their relatives. Samson's wife wept before him for seven days, frustrating him emotionally and probably sexually. She continued to press him, saying, "You only hate me and you do not love me." The tears and nagging of a wife can break the strongest resolve.

Then, says the text, "The Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily." Samson went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty men, a situation that the Lord began to use. Samson's anger "burned," landing him into a lot of trouble. And finally, "Samson's wife was given to his companion"

### V. Principles and Application

This text highlights some sobering spiritual principles. I will mention four.

*A. We can have all kinds of talents and gifts, and we can be empowered by God, yet it takes a life of discipline, wisdom, and submission to the Lordship of Christ in order for us to utilize these things.*

Samson had a special strength and a special calling, yet it was not the word of God but his passions and his desires that controlled him. For all his strength he was a weak man because he never learned to control himself. The proverb says, "He who rules his spirit [is better] than he who captures a city" (Prov. 16:32) Although he was fully capable of capturing a city single-handedly, Samson did not discipline and rule his own desires and lusts. As a result, for all his strength, he was a weak man.

Christians are filled with the Spirit of God who has given us resources, gifts, and talents, and yet, the Spirit-filled life and our utilizing these resources is not an automatic response on our part. Our spirit needs to be fed by prayer and by the word of God. We must pray for wisdom and submit to discipline. Self-discipline is not denying our drives and desires; it is submitting them to the will of God and to his timing. One of the fruits of the Spirit, of course, is self-control. We are not invincible. If we do not disci-

pline our lives, then our power dissipates and we squander our resources. The tragedy of Samson is that although he was a man of great potential, he wasted much of his promise. Why? It was because he was ruled by his passions. The same scenario can befall any one among us. There is a lion on the loose and he is seeking someone to devour.

What a great word this is for young people! There is much in our society today that is wasteful and destructive — drug abuse, the AIDS disaster, we could go on. As I look back on my own life I am saddened as I recall the years that I wasted. I went into a “sophomore slump” in college and it took a long time to come out of it. Now I work with young singles, and one thing that is close to my heart is that they not squander their early years. It is a sad thing to see lives ruled by passions. It is a sad thing to see potential squandered. There is nothing better than Christ going to come along. So engage your life in Christ now, grow in him and become mature men and women of faith.

*B. When we open the door to sin, we become slaves of sin. This leads to compromise in many areas of our lives, and draws others along with us.*

Samson gave into temptation. Both he and the Philistine woman were consenting adults, he reasoned, and no one would be affected by his behavior. But he was wrong. His acting on the temptation led to the following progression of sin: He went against the authority and wisdom of God and his parents; he disobeyed God by marrying a Philistine; he was not to associate with anything dead, but he did anyway; he deceived his parents and gave them unclean food to eat; he was not supposed to drink strong drink, but he probably did so; his selfish ambition drove him to try to gain 30 expensive garments; his rage was uncontrollable; he compromised his Nazirite vows and drew his parents into his disobedience. Samson had become a slave of sin. Listen to the words of the apostle Paul from Romans: “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” (Rom. 6.15-16).

Like Samson, Christians, too, have been set apart to God. When we came to Christ, we become a new creation. Our sin nature was crucified with Christ. We have been raised with him; we have been given the nature of the Father through the Spirit; and now we can walk in newness of life. Sin is not a mandate; it is an option. Sin is not our master, God is. We no longer have to be slaves of sin. We no longer have to listen to what sin tells us to do. When sin barks an order, however, we are so used to responding to the voice or the mood or the feeling that we sometimes obey. As Christians, we can choose to sin, and when we do so, we become a slave to sin. We start down a path that will lead to further sin, compromise, and the involvement of others. There is a natural progression. This is what is illustrated in Samson’s life, and this is what happens to us as well.

This principle is further illustrated in the life of David. One spring, the time of year when kings went out to war, David was lazy and he remained in Jerusalem. After he had taken a nap, he went up on the roof, and he saw a woman bathing. She looked good to him (lust of the eyes),

and lust was born. This in turn led to adultery. David deceived Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, and this eventually led to the murder of Uriah.

You cannot choose to sin in a vacuum. If you choose to sin, you will become the slave of sin.

*C. If something is truly good and God wants you to have it, then, firstly, God will give it to you without your having to take it, and, secondly, you do not have to compromise in order to get it.*

Samson compromised his Nazirite vow to get what he wanted. This man was obsessive-compulsive. He had to have this woman, no matter what the cost. And so he did what was right in his own eyes.

Although the text says that God used him anyway, we should not emulate this practice and use it as a pattern for our lives. If God wants us to have something, he will bring it to pass. We don’t have to force it to make it happen. If we compromise, we may end up with something we don’t want. God’s gifts are the best gifts. The gifts that he gives, without manipulation on our part, are the ones that bring the greatest joy. This is God’s very nature. He is our Father. Would he withhold anything from us that is good for us? James wrote in his letter, “Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow” (James 1:17).

God will not withhold good things from us. Samson had a problem believing this, as did Eve in the Garden of Eden. They wanted to be God and decide what was good for them. When I was younger, I had a goal to buy myself snow skis. I graduated from college, and when I finally began earning money, I decided to buy ski equipment. I bought everything I needed, but I was strangely unfulfilled because I felt I was being selfish and obsessive. I didn’t use good sense in my purchase; I just had to have it right then and there. I ended up hating the skis, and the boots hurt my feet. Finally, I sold everything because it had left such a bad taste in my mouth.

At this point I want to talk about love and marriage. Certainly, marriage is one arena where this principle is put to the test. Like Samson, many are tempted, because of infatuation, to choose to marry the person who looks good to them. People ask, “How can something that feels so good be wrong?” Samson desired a relationship based solely on physical attraction because he was controlled by his lust. Spiritual life and family backgrounds were not discussed. This is a very poor foundation for married life.

The desire to marry can be very strong. But so too can the temptation to be swept away by infatuation. The temptation to become involved physically before marriage fans the flame and distorts the vision even more. The temptation to marry a non-believer in order to satisfy the inner desires of the heart is very strong. The temptation to make a relationship work because we are tired of being single can be especially deceptive. Given the choice of following God, or having the possibility of romance and marriage, many choose romance.

But the Scripture says that God gives the best gifts. We don’t have to force things to happen. We don’t have to lie to ourselves. We don’t have to compromise our relationship with God in order for his will to be implemented in

our lives. If you want to marry, if you desire love, it is very much to your advantage to wait upon God. A relationship that might look good at first glance can sour very quickly. What we think we need can turn out to be the worst thing for us.

In all probability there are married couples here this morning who have been victimized by making bad choices in this area. They can identify with Samson, having married for the wrong reasons. Most couples are madly in love when they get married, but marriages are often undertaken for the wrong reasons, or they are based on an unhealthy foundation. You may be thinking to yourself, "I wish I had been more level-headed and God-centered when I first contemplated marriage." Perhaps you feel that you married the wrong person. Do not despair. As we learned in our study last week, God invades barren lives and barren marriages. He brings light out of darkness and redeems human life from the pit. He is capable of working in your life and in your marriage if you begin to cultivate your relationship with your spouse in a healthy way.

Let me make a few suggestions in this respect. (By the way, these are suggestions that all married couples need to attend to.)

1. If you are having marriage problems, talk to a professional counselor, a pastor, or a friend who can bring objectivity. Have someone pray with you. Do not be embarrassed to seek help. Most married couples, if they were honest, would admit to some difficulties in their marriages. The body of Christ is designed to care for you and to help you.

2. Be honest, and deal with your negative thoughts and feelings. Don't dwell on the past; you cannot change it. And forgive yourself. You can change the patterns of your relationships. Don't imagine that your life is ruined. God is faithful to bring all of us to a place where we become broken. This is not a bad thing, because it humbles us and draws us closer to him.

3. Stop gazing at what you don't have and instead, look at what you do have. There was a time in your relationship with your spouse when there was friendship and mutual attraction. You have some positive things to build on. Don't be deceived by thinking that everything would be perfect if you were married to someone else. Why start over when you have many good things to build upon?

4. Get back to wholehearted commitment to one another. Give all of yourselves to each other and affirm your commitment to each other. And do this often, not just once a year. Marriage needs this atmosphere of total commitment in order for both partners to feel secure enough to open up to each other.

5. Begin to serve one another. Most negative feelings and disappointments arise from selfish reasons. If you are thinking only about yourself, you are sure to be disappointed. Love, by its very nature, reaches out. Stop thinking about what you are not getting and begin to serve your partner independent of what he or she is doing. Love focuses on another. It is not concerned with self.

If your marriage is troubled, get back to the foundations and begin to build again in healthy ways. This will take time and effort, but remember, as we saw last week, our God's name is "Wonderful." He can restore life to a barren relationship.

If you are single, be wise about how you select your marriage partner. Make sure you go beyond the surface things, and remember to wait upon the Lord.

*D. Sometimes, even when we sin and choose wrong things, God overrules our choices for our own good.*

Despite his desires, his manipulation, etc., Samson did not end up with the girl. God saved him despite himself. He kept Samson separate for his own purposes. God is faithful to us. Like a parent who walks behind a child who is learning to walk, God protects us from danger. Sometimes, he allows us to fall and we suffer scrapes, but other times he catches us and saves us from disaster. We desire what seems right in our eyes, but what may look right often is not right, so God intervenes for his glory and our benefit.

Last week, I shared about a dilemma that my wife and I had concerning a house we bought. We had sold our house and we were looking for another, but nothing suitable was on the market. Prices were escalating and time was running out. As our dreams faded, our anxiety grew. At last we found a house. It wasn't really what we had in mind, but we felt we could make things work. We made a verbal agreement with the owner, but problems arose when we sat down to sign the documents. The owners wanted everything their way. They demanded that we pay most of the closing costs, and to accept the property as it was. While I in turn asked them to take responsibility for certain things, my anxiety was so great I was willing to do almost anything to have the situation resolved, to get on with life, to force my dream, so I kept compromising. Finally, I asked the owner to fix just one window, but he refused. That was the straw that broke the camel's back. For several months, my wife and I lamented. Maybe we should have made it work, we felt. But God saved us. We had to endure and wait longer, but when he gave us his gift, and paved the way so that we did not have to compromise, it was perfect and it was right. Now, every time my wife drives down our street, she thanks God for what was right in his eyes. This was just a house, of course — it was not a problem marriage situation — but the principle is true nonetheless.

God loves us so much he saves us from our own worst enemy — ourselves. May he grant to us the wisdom and the self-control to not waste our years, to not squander our resources, or be ruled by our passions; to not reach for what might be second best, but to wait on him and trust him for his perfect gifts.

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