

Bible Lessons

Quarterly Lessons for Adults and Young People



Spiritual Sleep

Awake to righteousness, and sin not.

—1 Corinthians 15:34a

Volume 58, No. 3

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THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS FOR THE 3rd QUARTER, 2026

Spiritual Sleep

Physical rest and sleep are essential to our well-being. Emotional and spiritual rest are even more important. However, the first part of 1 Corinthians 15:34 warns us to, “Awake to righteousness, and sin not,” implying that spiritual sleep is dangerous.

We will explore a few circumstances the Bible warns us about that can cause spiritual sleep. Interestingly, many of these are cloaked as what we normally count as blessings: riches, success, entertainment, strength, intelligence, status, security, peace, ancestry, health, and ease. While we are thankful when we enjoy these things, there is an inherent hazard in complacency that can overtake us when we are blessed with them. Thankfully, if we heed what the Bible teaches, each of these benefits can be properly enjoyed without lulling us to sleep spiritually.

Difficulties can also pose a threat of spiritual sleep, just as physical trauma can cause unconsciousness. God is aware of this possibility as well, and He is faithful to help us. —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

LESSON 1: JULY 5, 2026

THE DANGER OF RICHES

Revelation 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

MEMORY VERSE: And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry.

—**Luke 12:19**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

The congregation in Laodicea was blessed with riches and worldly goods. However, their wealth put their souls at risk by fostering a lukewarm spiritual condition. God counseled them to repent, open their hearts' doors to Jesus, and enjoy the true heavenly riches offered to all.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Revelation 3:14 **Angel of the church:** a messenger; a pastor (*Strong's*).

Revelation 3:18 **Gold tried in the fire:** Just as pure gold is refined by fire to purity, God intended adversity in their lives to purify their hearts if they would humble themselves before God.

Revelation 3:18 **Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve:** God used the metaphor of the eyesalve the Laodiceans produced to illustrate that they should apply His word and Spirit to their spiritual eyes so they might see more clearly. Their wealth had clouded their understanding of their deep need for God's grace in their lives—something their great wealth alone could not procure.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The apostle Paul helped plant the church in Laodicea. He spent enough time there to write his epistle to the church in Colossae.

Laodicea, located in modern-day Turkey, was built on seven hills, had three marble theaters, and was surrounded by a great wall. It was situated near the river Lycus and was ideally located for trade. Laodicea had many banks, and produced black wool and eye salve for export. Due to its immense wealth and pride, the city refused Roman financial aid after it was heavily damaged by an earthquake in 60 AD.

Because some of the city's inhabitants formed the church in Laodicea, it is likely that several in the congregation were quite wealthy. The letter to them in Revelation 3 stated that their attitude toward their wealth brought leanness to their souls. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. How successful are “lukewarm” attitudes in business, relationships, war, sports, and many other human endeavors?
2. How can being “comfortably wealthy” make a person feel self-sufficient?
3. If a person feels blessed with an abundance of worldly goods, how could this lead them to believe they also have enough of God’s grace and influence in their lives?
4. Why is God not interested in His children feeling independent of His mercy and guidance in their lives?
5. How does a person apply “spiritual eyesalve” so they might have clear spiritual vision?
6. Why does God knock at the door of our hearts instead of walking in uninvited?
7. How do we overcome the temptations that come with temporal wealth?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Job was a wealthy man, yet he proved faithful. God trusted him to maintain the proper attitude both when he enjoyed the benefits of affluence and when he was stripped of it. Abraham had great riches,

but maintained the right perspective. David devoted immense resources to preparing for the temple's construction.

The Lord has blessed many with temporal prosperity in our time and has led them to invest their money in God's kingdom. They lay up for themselves "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matthew 6:20).

"Dear Heavenly Father, help me not allow temporal blessings to turn my heart away from dependence on you. Help me, rather, to spread your gospel with what you entrust to my stewardship. Amen!"

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

My dad died when I was five. We never went hungry and always had a roof over our heads, but struggled financially. Very early I decided when I became an adult, I wanted nice things: a beautiful house and a comfortable livelihood, to name a few. Eric and I have never been wealthy, but in the fullness of time, the Lord blessed us with a comfortable income. There came a point in our lives when Eric was being groomed to become one of the vice presidents of a large corporation. I began to think we would become millionaires. My focus shifted from the Lord and onto Eric's job. I made a terrible mistake. I acknowledged that the Lord had blessed us, but I also took part in the credit for good management.

Not long after that, everything began to fall apart. Riches so easily take wings and fly away! Eric's company relocated all upper management to their Atlanta headquarters. After praying about it, Eric didn't feel clear about relocating. He found a local job at a much lower wage, but he was laid off shortly after being hired.

We went for a year without income. The resources we had begun using to remodel our place into my dream home dried up. The house got termites, and we eventually had to tear it down. We ran completely out of money. It was a humbling time. I was desperately praying for the Lord to open up a job for Eric.

The Bible says the Lord will not chasten forever. At the point when we couldn't pay our bills, the Lord provided. Oh, the relief! Over time, the Lord continued to bless Eric with an even better job and blessed us with a nice home.

I am so thankful the Lord loved me enough to chasten me, even though it was a very difficult time. How tragic it would have been if He had allowed me to continue in the direction I was headed and lose my soul.

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11).

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

LESSON 2: JULY 12, 2026

THE DANGER OF PAST SUCCESS

Joshua 9:3 And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,

4 They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;

5 And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* mouldy.

6 And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.

7 And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?

8 And they said unto Joshua, We *are* thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who *are* ye? and from whence come ye?

9 And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt,

10 And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which *was* at Ashtaroth.

11 Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We *are* your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us.

12 This our bread we took hot *for* our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy:

13 And these bottles of wine, which we filled, *were* new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey.

14 And the men took of their victuals, and asked not *counsel* at the mouth of the LORD.

15 And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them.

1 Chronicles 13:1 And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, *and* with every leader.

2 And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If *it seem* good unto you, and *that it be* of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, *that are* left in all the land of Israel, and with them *also* to the priests and Levites *which are* in their cities *and* suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us:

3 And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul.

4 And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.

5 So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjathjearim.

6 And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, *that is*, to Kirjathjearim, which *belonged* to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth *between* the cherubims, whose name is called *on it*.

7 And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart.

8 And David and all Israel played before God with all *their* might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.

9 And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled.

10 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.

MEMORY VERSE: Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. —**Proverbs 16:18**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Joshua and all the elders, because of their recent victories in battle, assumed that the Lord was in their decision to accept the evidence presented by the ambassadors from Gibeon.

David consulted with everyone about his plan to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem. There were no dissenters, so David and all Israel brought the ark as far as the threshingfloor of Chidon, where Uzza was struck dead for reaching out to steady the ark when the oxen stumbled.

In both cases, past success brought a false sense of security and the assumption that God was in their decision. They failed to seek the Lord's counsel, and the results were disastrous.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Joshua 9:14 **Took of their victuals:** tasted the bad food in token of friendship (*Barnes*).

1 Chronicles 13:3 **Bring again the ark of our God to us:** David's pious proposal to help encourage the general population of Israel to worship God (*Matthew Henry*).

1 Chronicles 13:5 **Kirjath-jearim:** a city located about 7.5 miles west of Jerusalem on one of the highest hills. The ark of God resided there for twenty years in the house of Abinadab, soon after the Philistines had sent it back on a new cart (*1 Samuel 6*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

The ambassadors from Gibeon were careful not to mention Israel's most recent victories. They spoke only of hearing about Israel's deliverance from Egypt forty years earlier and of Israel's conquests over Heshbon and Bashan on the other side of the Jordan River several months earlier.

David was grieved that Israel had not inquired of the ark of God during King Saul's forty-year reign. David's concern for Israel's spiritual welfare was proper and commendable. Because bringing the ark of

God back to Jerusalem seemed like a “good idea” and because God had blessed David exceedingly up to that point, David failed to seek God’s counsel as carefully as he sought human counsel. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. The Gibeonites tricked Joshua and the elders by pretending to be something they were not. In what ways does the devil use that tactic today?
2. Why did they not ask counsel from the mouth of the Lord?
3. What can we do today to prevent a similar failure?
4. Why did David consult with the “captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader”?
5. David almost always sought God’s counsel. Why did he not seek it this time?
6. How had the Lord been blessing David up to this point?
7. Why did God not excuse David’s oversight, even though his intentions seemed noble?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The seventh and eighth chapters of Joshua recount Israel’s initial failure and subsequent victory over Ai. While Achan’s sin was to blame for their loss in the first battle with Ai, the general attitude of the people before that battle is worth considering: “And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few. So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai” (Joshua 7:3-4).

After the sin of Achan was discovered and punished, God instructed Joshua to “take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land” (Joshua 8:1b).

Many years later, when David commanded Joab to number the fighting men of Israel, Joab reminded David, “Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold...” (2 Samuel 24:3a). Joab never lost sight of the fact that it was God’s blessings, not their own military prowess, that gave them victory in battle.

“Dear Lord, thank you for the victory you promised me over everything that comes against my soul. Help me never forget that it is your power and blessing, not my own goodness or past spiritual victories, that assures my success in future battles. Amen!”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

Many times, there are very solemn lessons contained in God’s word that we may pass over or forget. This omission does not exempt us from the commands of God’s word. Although David’s desire was viewed as the thing to do, no one sought God’s guidance. The ark being carried on the shoulders of the Levites was not a new command. The failure to handle the ark in a proper manner cost the life of Uzzah, even though his action had an honest intent.

Joshua and the princes were confident in what they did. A brief inquiry of God would have saved them a lot of trouble in future years.

We can easily fall into the trap of thinking we know what to do and fail to seek God’s guidance. If we trust ourselves, we will find ourselves in situations of failure that we should not have to experience. As we can see from the examples in the lesson, we will also suffer the consequences of God’s judgment in those failures.

I am mindful of an incident where an older saint asked the thoughts of a young person concerning a matter. The elder saint was warned to refrain from doing what was intended. The response to the warning was a question that I’m paraphrasing: “You mean to tell me that after all of the times that God has led and blessed me in what I’ve done, I can’t do this?” The elder saint then stated that they would pray about the matter. Later, they told the young saint that the Lord had shown them to refrain from doing what they had intended. If the matter had been pursued as intended, a lot of damage would have taken place. In the end, God took care of the matter.

There is a reason God’s word tells us that His thoughts are not our thoughts and our ways are not His ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). This passage applies to all of us, not just to the wicked. Past success does not guarantee future success. We are always dependent upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

—Bro. Paul Phillips

LESSON 3: JULY 19, 2026

THE PULL OF UNGODLY INFLUENCES

Genesis 13:5 And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we *be* brethren.

9 *Is* not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if *thou wilt take* the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if *thou depart* to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *even* as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched *his* tent toward Sodom.

13 But the men of Sodom *were* wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

Genesis 19:14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

16 And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

26 But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

MEMORY VERSE: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica. —**2 Timothy 4:10a**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Lot selfishly chose the plain of Jordan when his uncle, Abram, let him pick first. This decision proved unfortunate for Lot's entire family. When God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot lost his married daughters, his sons-in-law, and his wife. Lot and his two remaining daughters escaped alone, taking only what they could carry on their backs.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 13:12: **Cities of the plain:** the five cities of Canaan: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar. These cities are generally believed to have been located in the once-fertile region of the southern part of the present-day Dead Sea.

Genesis 13:12: **Pitched his tent toward Sodom:** The city of Sodom, the largest of the five Canaanite cities, drew Lot and his family with the allure of society, entertainment, ease, and security. Eventually, Lot moved his family from the smaller cities to Sodom.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Lord called Abram to a new land, and Lot, his nephew, accompanied him. Over the course of three years, the Lord blessed the flocks of Abram and Lot to the point that it became necessary for them to part ways.

Not long after Lot moved his family to Sodom, the Lord determined to destroy the city because of the inhabitants' extreme sinfulness. The Lord warned Abraham of Sodom's impending

destruction, and Abraham pleaded with the Lord to not destroy the city if He could find ten righteous people in it. Since there were fewer than ten righteous people in Sodom, the Lord, mindful of the lone God-fearing man within its walls, led Lot, his wife, and two unmarried daughters out of the city. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Describe the various steps Lot took toward living in Sodom.
2. How easy was it for Lot to continue his eventual migration into Sodom once he began?
3. How important is a “first step” in spiritual and moral matters?
4. Why was Lot unsuccessful in persuading his sons-in-law to escape the city’s destruction?
5. What does this tell us about some of the consequences of our decisions, even if we ourselves are spared in the end?
6. Lot lost all his wealth and earthly possessions in the destruction of Sodom. How is this similar to the end of life for everyone, and what will happen on judgment day?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Just as Abraham gave Lot the chance to choose where to move after they parted ways, God also gives us the power of choice. Our choices carry built-in consequences that are not always apparent at first. Because we cannot see the future, it is vital to seek God’s will. If Lot had taken time to pray about the choice Abraham gave him, God could have shown him that some of his daughters would likely marry men of Sodom. God could have warned him that his future sons-in-law would eventually laugh at the idea of the city being destroyed by fire and brimstone.

Advertisers are fully aware of the human tendency to continue down a path once it is embarked upon. If a person becomes convinced of one thing, it usually leads to a series of follow-up decisions. For example, if a person sees an attractive restaurant billboard and decides to stop at that restaurant, they are likely to get out of the car, walk through the door, and be seated at a table. Once seated, the waiter or waitress will hand them a menu. There is a high likelihood they will order something from the menu. Once the food arrives, it is

almost a foregone conclusion that at least some of it will be eaten. In other words, the first bite was decided when they chose to “try” the restaurant—not when they picked up the fork.

Our life decisions always start small, but they all lead to larger, life-altering decisions that affect us for the rest of our lives, as well as the lives of all those around us. We are never able to see the full end of these decisions on the front end, but, thank the Lord, we can ask Him where these decisions will lead us, and He will be glad to show us the right path for our feet.

“Dear God, thank you for your ability and eagerness to show me the path my feet should take in life. Help me to listen to your still, small voice and heed the little nudges. May my decisions lead me away from the pull of Sodom rather than into the confines of its walls. Amen!” —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

I knew a little boy about twelve years old who loved Jesus and had made promises to Him that he would live for the Lord and stay away from places of sin such as bars and pool halls.

As he grew into his teenage years, his high school buddies persuaded him that it would be harmless to play an innocent game of pool just for fun. As time went on, he began playing cards, and before long he was shooting pool and gambling with his buddies.

Oh, what a pull the influence of this world can have on our human nature.

One day, as that same young man was riding his bicycle home after leaving the pool hall, he heard a voice speak to him saying, “Did you not promise Me that you would not go into these kinds of places?”

I was that boy.

I made those promises to the Lord while walking to the bar many times to bring my father home. As a young boy, I saw how those kinds of places could destroy a man and his family. But the Lord, in His mercy, showed me that the influence of my buddies was leading me down the same path as my father.

Thank the Lord, a few months later I gave my heart and life to Him—but not without a fight. The devil stood there and told me that if I went down to the altar, I would surely lose my buddies. But thank

the Lord, I yielded my heart and life to Him, and I thank Him for the victory I have today.

I encourage all of our young people to get a strong hold on the Lord, because the influence of friends can have a powerful pull toward the things and ways of the world. —Bro. Rick Cox

LESSON 4: JULY 26, 2026

THE DANGER OF GREAT STRENGTH

Judges 16:4 And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah.

5 And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength *lieth*, and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.

6 And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength *lieth*, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.

7 And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him with them.

9 Now *there were* men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.

10 And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound.

11 And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

12 Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And *there were* liars in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread.

13 And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web.

14 And she fastened *it* with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web.

15 And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart *is* not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength *lieth*.

16 And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, *so* that his soul was vexed unto death;

17 That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I *have been* a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.

18 And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

19 And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

20 And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.

21 But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

22 Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

MEMORY VERSE: For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong *men* have been slain by her. —**Proverbs 7:26**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Samson was given the gift of great strength. Unfortunately, he took his God-given strength for granted and lost it after being lulled into spiritual and literal sleep.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Judges 16:4 **Delilah**: a Philistine woman whose name means “languishing”—to exist, continue in miserable or disheartening conditions (*Strong’s*).

Judges 16:17 **Nazarite**: separate and consecrated to God (*Strong’s*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

It is natural to picture Samson as bulky. However, Samson understood that his great strength came only from God and was tied to his obedience to the angel’s command to his parents—that he live under the Nazarite vow, never cutting his hair. He knew that if his hair were ever cut, he would become as weak as any other man. When Samson awoke after his hair had been cut, he did not at first realize that his hair and his God-given strength were gone. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why were the Philistines puzzled by Samson’s great strength?
2. How seriously did Samson regard his understanding of the source of his great strength?
3. In what ways were the conditions for Samson to receive and maintain strength from God similar to the requirements for our spiritual success?
4. What does the devil believe about the source of our spiritual strength?
5. What does the devil try to make us believe about our spiritual strength? Why?
6. How do our beliefs and actions about our spiritual strength affect us?

7. What other acts of disobedience does the Bible describe that had disastrous results?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The greatest danger of possessing God-given strength is our attitude toward it. Taking God's gift of spiritual strength for granted is the fastest way to lose it. History is sprinkled with stories of great men and women whose work was marred by their belief that they were too strong to fail, regardless of their actions.

It is safe to say there has never been anyone blessed with as much strength as Samson, yet he failed miserably when he allowed himself to take for granted the gift God gave him.

In the end when Samson's hair regrew, he prayed for God to avenge him for the loss of his two eyes. Thankfully, God restored His gift of strength to Samson. However, how much more could Samson have done for Israel had he not taken God's gift for granted?

"Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the strength you give me each day to live for you and do your will. Help me to never take that strength for granted. Help me guard it with appreciation and obedience. Amen!" —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

Whether or not Samson had the appearance of being physically strong or not is not the point in this lesson. We know that the only thing that changed in his appearance when he lost his strength was the length of his hair. At some point, Samson began to believe that there was no way that merely cutting his hair would decrease his strength. If he had really believed that obedience to the Nazarite vow was the ultimate source of his strength, he would never have told Delilah that cutting his hair would cause him to lose his strength. She had already proven multiple times that she would grab at any straw to defeat his strength. Somewhere along the line, Samson began to trust in himself as the source of his strength rather than in obedience to God.

Song #268 (ELS), verse 1 says, "Be strong and valiant for the truth..." The strength to be valiant for the truth comes from being empowered by God and truth. If we ever come to the point that we

feel that we can stand for truth through our own strength, we will find ourselves failing, just as Samson did.

Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). He taught that our spiritual strength is ALWAYS dependent on His help. The danger lies not in the greatness of the strength itself, but in our perception that we possess that strength by our own might. —Bro. Dan Adams

LESSON 5: AUGUST 2, 2026

THE DANGER OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

2 Chronicles 1:1 And Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the LORD his God *was* with him, and magnified him exceedingly.

6 And Solomon went up thither to the brasen altar before the LORD, which *was* at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it.

7 In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.

8 And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead.

9 Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.

10 Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, *that is so great?*

11 And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king:

12 Wisdom and knowledge *is* granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that *have been* before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.

1 Kings 10:1 And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.

2 And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

3 And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not *any* thing hid from the king, which he told her not.

4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,

5 And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.

6 And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom.

7 Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen *it*: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

8 Happy *are* thy men, happy *are* these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, *and* that hear thy wisdom.

9 Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.

1 Kings 11:1 But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, *and* Hittites;

2 Of the nations *concerning* which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: *for* surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.

3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.

4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of David his father.

5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as *did* David his father.

7 Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that *is* before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,

10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded.

11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: *but* I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; *but* will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

MEMORY VERSE: Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. — **Proverbs 4:7**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Solomon is the wisest man who ever lived. God granted his prayer for wisdom and understanding to rule Israel and promised that his wisdom and riches would surpass those of any other king. However, Solomon's great wisdom did not guarantee his integrity with God. When he was old, his many wives turned his heart away from God toward idolatry.

WORD DEFINITIONS

2 Chronicles 1:10 **Wisdom**: discerning or judging what is most just, proper, and useful; discretion; the exercise of sound judgment, either in avoiding evils or in pursuing good (*KJV Dictionary*).

2 Chronicles 1:10 **Knowledge**: a clear perception of truth and fact; illumination of the mind; skill (*KJV Dictionary*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Solomon wrote 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs. God granted him an unparalleled understanding of human nature and science. Solomon was aware of God's clear commandment against marrying women from foreign countries who knew nothing of worshiping the One True God. Despite this knowledge, he turned aside to follow the accepted custom among powerful rulers of the time, marrying the daughters of neighboring kings to strengthen political alliances.

—C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Solomon asked for wisdom to fulfill his duties as king of Israel. What might the end of Solomon's reign have been like if he had also asked for a faithful heart toward God?
2. God referred to David in Acts 13:22 as "a man after mine own heart" because of his great love for God's commandments and precepts, as described in Psalm 119. Why did God not say the same about Solomon?
3. How is having great wisdom to rule a kingdom different from loving God's statutes?
4. Describe how it is in our nature to take something valuable for granted when it is given to us without any effort on our part.
5. It was common for kings to marry the daughters of neighboring kings to secure political and economic stability and to showcase their wealth and status. Describe the logic that could lead someone to believe this was a wise course to take and that it "must be God's will."
6. In the end, what impact did Solomon's "wisdom" in having many wives have on him—and Israel?

7. How can we distinguish between godly wisdom and human wisdom for ourselves?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Noah built a huge structure that would float for an extended period of time on a vast body of water that had not yet appeared. Not only did he start building the ark, but he persevered for one hundred years, even when everyone but his immediate family believed his actions were foolish. Nothing happened after God finally closed the door on Noah, his family, and the animals on board – until the seventh day.

Abraham moved from his homeland to an unknown destination, then gave his nephew, Lot, first choice when dividing the promised land between them. Several years later, he laid his son of promise on the altar, expecting God to raise him from the dead after offering him as a sacrifice.

Joshua and the Israelite army marched around the walls of Jericho for seven days. Nothing happened until the seventh round on the seventh day.

At God's command, Gideon reduced his army to three hundred men and expected to win a major battle against 135,000 the next day.

David, a shepherd boy armed only with a sling, ran toward the giant Goliath, believing God would prevail. Several years later, in a cave, David spared King Saul's life when he had the chance to kill him in his sleep.

Wisdom from God flies in the face of conventional thinking, even to the point of seeming "crazy." This "wisdom from above," however, never fails and never leaves a bitter aftertaste, as human wisdom so often does.

"Dear Lord, thank you for the godly wisdom you eagerly offer me. Help me choose your wisdom over my own. Amen!"

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

How sad it is that Solomon's strong point perhaps turned out to be his weakness. Being such a wise man with wisdom above his fellows, no doubt it was easy to turn to his own understanding.

Perhaps Solomon thought: “Moses wrote many things; yet, with the wisdom I have, I believe I have found a way to separate sin from its consequences.”

In her mind, Eve of old saw that the tree was good for food and desired to make one wise. No doubt she thought, even as satan had told her, that there would be no death involved if she ate of the fruit; but alas, there were consequences and spiritual death did ensue.

Perhaps Ahab was influenced by the decisions that Solomon made, causing his people to suffer. Have there not been great men today who have made unsound decisions, such as same-sex marriage, etc.? Our country is suffering because of it and will continue to suffer. If any man turns from the wisdom of the Word, he will walk in darkness.

—Bro. E.E. Gracey

LESSON 6: AUGUST 9, 2026

THE DANGERS OF STATUS AND SUCCESS

Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

1 Corinthians 9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation *of the gospel* is committed unto me.

18 What is my reward then? *Verily* that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

19 For though I be free from all *men*, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

27 But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

1 Corinthians 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

MEMORY VERSE: Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

—**Philippians 2:3**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Jesus warned against self-assurance after performing mighty works in His name. The apostle Paul refused to bask in self-glory because of what God accomplished through his life for the good of souls. He also understood the danger of complacency after success, and that the absence of God's love in our hearts renders good deeds done in our own efforts useless when it comes to attaining heaven.

WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Corinthians 9:18 **Abuse not my power in the gospel:** Both Jesus and the apostle Paul taught that those who labor in the work of the gospel should also be supported temporally by it (Luke 10:7 and 1 Timothy 5:18). However, Paul did not take personal advantage of that principle. He worked with his hands as a tentmaker in the cities where he brought the gospel (Acts 18:1-4 and 1 Thessalonians 2:9).

LESSON BACKGROUND

The ministry of Jesus came at the height of the religious elite's power in Israel. The Pharisees and Sadducees considered themselves

above the common people, often imposing man-made rules that only made the ordinary person's life more difficult while benefiting those who made the rules.

Saul of Tarsus was particularly zealous in upholding the religious system that crucified Jesus. Acts 8:3 describes Saul making "havock of the church" and putting men and women into prison. Saul was on his way to Damascus when he finally realized that his human efforts were evil. Instead of "helping God," he had been fighting Him.

Later, the apostle Paul made it clear that he did not rely on his work in the gospel to earn his way into heaven. He also knew that he could miss heaven altogether if he did not "keep under his body" and if he did not place godly love ahead of everything else. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. How is it possible to say and do good things, yet not be in the will of God?
2. What danger lies in the belief that good works can help a person "earn" heaven?
3. Why did Paul consider himself a "servant to all"?
4. What danger did Paul consider himself in if he did not keep himself under control?
5. If Paul felt the need to be mindful of the pull of fleshly appetites, how should we consider this danger?
6. Why did Paul teach the saints in Corinth that speaking and doing mighty things in the name of the gospel of Christ profited them nothing unless they first had godly love?
7. Why would the devil be eager for anyone who says or does anything for the good of souls to become complacent about their own soul?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When the devil tempted Jesus after His forty-day fast in the wilderness, he wielded some of his most powerful tools: Jesus' physical needs, His status as the Son of God, God's care and love for His Son, and Jesus' desire to fulfill His commission to save lost mankind. In other words, the devil tried to use Jesus against Himself.

Consumer advertisements often tell us we “deserve” the goods or services they are promoting. The devil does the same when he says we deserve whatever he offers.

Advertisers sometimes put their target audience on a pedestal, then offer them things that play up to that status. The pressure to live up to the high expectations set for a consumer can be overwhelming. The devil is the author and master of this trick.

People often participate in the custom of purchasing and giving gifts and cards to express or reciprocate love for friends and family. The greeting card industry has steadily expanded the occasions for this practice. Retail merchants report that Christmas gift sales account for one-fifth of their yearly revenue. While giving and receiving cards and gifts is enjoyable, the future destiny of our souls does not rest on our ability to prove our love for God or validate His love for us through gift exchanges, good deeds, or fair-sounding words. Our salvation rests solely on the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, which washes away our sins when we repent and turn from them. We do not deserve salvation, nor can we ever earn it.

Jesus came to earth for the sole purpose of redeeming mankind to His Father. The devil’s attempt to hijack His mission came through the temptation that “the whole world” would be given to Jesus if He only bowed down and worshiped the devil. How many souls have been deceived into taking the shortcut of believing their own religious works were sufficient to save them?

“Dear God, help me remember that my goodness is but filthy rags. Help me never to rest on my good words or works. Amen!”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

All goodness comes from God. None of us possess goodness on our own; He is the source of every good thing we do or receive. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

Jesus Christ did many mighty works and performed many miracles while He was on earth, yet He was careful to give all glory, honor, and praise to God. The account of Jesus’ discourse with the rich young ruler in the gospel of Mark highlights that intention. Jesus

was addressed as Good Master, and He quickly corrected the young man's mistaken thinking. "And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God" (Mark 10:18). In addition, the young man failed to understand the essence of what Jesus was saying. He wanted to know how to obtain eternal life, but when he learned the cost, he was unwilling to pay it. He was confident in the good deeds he had done and the commandments he had kept. Yet he still lacked one important thing and would not surrender it, even for eternal life.

Micah 6:8 offers wise counsel for avoiding pride in "our status or success"—walk humbly with thy God. Following this counsel will ensure that God receives all HIS due honor and praise and will keep us on the path to eternal life. May God help us to remain sober and vigilant against every attack, snare, and trap of the enemy!

—Bro. Tavis Browne

LESSON 7: AUGUST 16, 2026

THE DANGER OF HISTORICALLY SECURE FORTIFICATIONS

Joshua 15:63 As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.

2 Samuel 5:6 And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.

7 Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David.

8 And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.

9 So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Matthew 26:33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

MEMORY VERSE: Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. — **1 Corinthians 10:12**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Israel could not conquer the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, until David captured the city after becoming king. The Jebusites were so confident in their fortifications that they taunted David and his men by stationing blind and lame guards atop the city wall. Likewise, Peter, trusting in his own strength, was sure he would never be offended because of Jesus, no matter what.

WORD DEFINITIONS

2 Samuel 5:6 **Except thou take away the blind and the lame:** The Jebusites were so confident in their fortress that they stationed the city's blind and lame as watchmen atop the city wall. Scarcely anything could have been more insulting to David and his warriors (*Clarke*).

2 Samuel 5:8 **Gutter:** a subterranean channel carved by flowing water (*Barnes*). Other sources believe the city had a complex underground water system formed by natural fissures that provided access beneath the wall. Charles Warren discovered such an arrangement in 1867. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/water-works/>

LESSON BACKGROUND

For almost four hundred years, the Jebusites held out against being overthrown by the Israelites. Unlike Jericho, the walls of Jebus, later called Jerusalem, were integrated into the steep slopes of the

mountaintop on which it sat, making it almost impossible to approach during an attack.

David reigned in Hebron as king for seven years and six months. When he began his reign over the whole kingdom, David desired the city of Jebus as his capital. He was inspired to attack the city through its only vulnerability, the gutter system that supplied it with water. The challenge was issued that whoever led the first breakthrough would become commander. Joab went up first—through the “water shaft/gutter” route—and so he was made chief/commander (I Chronicles 11:6).

Peter is the only human recorded to have walked on water. When Jesus called him, Peter stepped out of the boat and walked toward Jesus! On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter was one of three disciples who saw Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah (Elias). Near the end of Jesus’ time on earth, Peter tried to defend Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the process, he cut off the high priest’s servant’s ear. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. After almost four hundred years of successfully repelling the Israelites' attacks, how secure did the Jebusites feel within their city walls?
2. How does Joab’s use of a hidden gutter system to open the city gates illustrate the way the devil uses subtle vulnerabilities to gain access to our hearts, in order that he might weaken and defeat us?
3. How did faith in the walls of Jebus prove detrimental to the Jebusites?
4. In what ways can our “strengths” become our “greatest weaknesses”?
5. Why was Peter so certain he would never be offended because of Jesus?
6. How can we take heed when we believe we have what it takes to remain faithful?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Military history has many examples of heavy fortifications designed to withstand everything an invading army might throw at

them. In every case, the invaders found a way around the barrier, rendering the defense in that area useless.

World War II saw at least three instances in which massive investments of money, time, and resources were poured into defense systems considered impregnable: Fort Eben-Emael in Belgium, the Maginot Line in France, and the coastal guns of Singapore. German paratroopers landed on the roof of Fort Eben-Emael and soon neutralized the fort, which Belgium considered too strong to be taken. The Maginot Line, a system of bunkers, tunnels, and artillery, was designed to protect the border between France and Germany. The advancing German army went around the Maginot Line through the Ardennes Forest, rendering it useless. The coastal guns of Singapore, known as the “Gibraltar of the East,” were huge guns aimed at the ocean that could sink any approaching ship. The Japanese army went the long way around and invaded by land instead of by sea. The heavy guns of the fortifications proved ineffective in repelling the land attack.

Our human efforts to outsmart the devil never prove sufficient. He will always find a way around our defenses, no matter how intricate or well-intentioned they may be. Our only salvation is to trust in God’s love, power, and wisdom. He alone will defeat every attack by the enemy.

“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the great privilege of trusting you as my only defense. Help me always look to you rather than relying solely on my own efforts to resist the devil. Amen!”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

We must maintain an attitude of continually growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is danger in becoming spiritually complacent—satisfied with our present condition instead of maintaining a humble urgency to grow deeper in our salvation. Confidence in our own strength often precedes a fall. Untempered strengths, combined with ignorance of our weaknesses, can lead to failure. Scripture reminds us, “When I am weak, then am I strong,” for true strength comes through dependence upon the Lord. Even if we have not slipped into sin for decades, we must not relax spiritually,

but continually put on the whole armor of God and learn to exercise it faithfully.

The first commandment—to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength—and the second, to love others, must trump every other commandment we embrace. Christ commanded us to forgive, love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who spitefully use us. As long as we are continually honing this intense love for God, for the brethren, and for the lost, our soul will be secure.

A close, loving relationship with God produces deeper sensitivity in how we conduct ourselves, trust Him, and seek to please Him; but, mere adherence to standards of modesty or refusing to go to the doctor can become a false security if we've lost our first love for Him. Such practices should be the natural outgrowth of grace, both as we look for opportunities to share the gospel of peace and let Him transform us with the fruits of the Spirit.

Just as many Jews rested in being Abraham's descendants, many today trust in church membership or a verbal confession of faith while neglecting obedient fellowship with God. Faith and family are historically secure fortifications God has given against Satan's destructive work, yet complacency weakens both. We must intentionally nurture our relationship with God and our families, lest worldly distractions leave us spiritually vulnerable and unable "to withstand in the evil day." —Bro. Jeremy Booher

LESSON 8: AUGUST 23, 2026

THE DANGER OF HISTORICALLY PEACEFUL SITUATIONS

Judges 18:1 In those days *there was* no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day *all their* inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.

2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there.

7 Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that *were* therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and *there was* no magistrate in the land, that might put *them* to shame in *any* thing; and they *were* far from the Zidonians, and had no business with *any* man.

8 And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What *say* ye?

9 And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it *is* very good: and *are* ye still? be not slothful to go, *and* to enter to possess the land.

10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where *there is* no want of any thing that *is* in the earth.

27 And they took *the things* which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people *that were* at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.

28 And *there was* no deliverer, because it *was* far from Zidon, and they had no business with *any* man; and it was in the valley that *lieth* by Bethrehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein.

Matthew 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

1 Corinthians 14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

1 Thessalonians 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. —**Ephesians 5:15**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

The people of Laish lived in a remote area and had long enjoyed relative peace, which made them careless and thoughtless about their national security. When the tribe of Dan encountered the people of Laish and their indifference, they knew it would be easy to overcome Laish.

Jesus warned His disciples that He was sending them out as sheep among wolves. Knowing this, the disciples were cautioned to be as wise as serpents, yet to remain as harmless as doves.

The apostle Paul had similar advice for the Corinthian church: to be children in malice but to be men in understanding (wise as those who have faced adversity and overcome it).

In the memory verse, Paul advised the brethren in Ephesus to walk circumspectly, looking all around at all times. To do otherwise would have been foolish.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Judges 18:7 **Careless:** boldly feeling safe and secure with assurance (*Strong's*).

Judges 18:7 **No magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in any thing:** The people of Laish did not bother to elect or appoint anyone to oversee their general welfare or to enforce any codes of conduct. People like this would fall prey to the ills of careless living much more easily than those accustomed to greater discipline. Since this group was indifferent to everything else, why would they give thought to their national security? (*Matthew Henry*).

Judges 18:7 **Far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man:** The people of Laish were far enough from other people,

with the Zidonians the closest, that they had no interaction with anyone. Laish was a colony of the Zidonians; therefore, the people of Laish felt no threat from them, fostering the assumption that they were safe from everyone (*Barnes*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Laish, later called Dan, lay near the far northern extreme of Israel, near the head of the Jordan River. The Zidonians, who founded the colony of Laish several hundred years before Israel entered the land of Canaan, lived northwest of Laish on the Mediterranean coast. The Zidonians were never fully conquered by Israel, and they caused many problems throughout Israel's history. Jezebel, the wicked queen of the northern kingdom of Israel, exemplified some of the trouble brought by the Zidonians. She was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and introduced the idols Baal and Asherah to Israel. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. When a habit of carelessness has been in place for centuries, how easy is it to maintain that attitude?
2. How easy is it to assume a peaceful situation will continue on indefinitely?
3. Describe why it is necessary for the righteous to be wise and cautious.
4. Why did Jesus tell His disciples to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves”?
5. Why is a time when people believe there is “peace and safety” the most dangerous time of all?
6. How can a person “watch and be sober” and still have faith, love, and hope?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

George Washington and his troops crossed the ice-choked Delaware River late at night on December 25th, 1776. He caught the Hessian soldiers by surprise as they enjoyed Christmas festivities. The German mercenaries had no idea their celebration was about to end

tragically. General Washington counted on their carelessness, and he was not disappointed.

Belshazzar and his thousand lords were in the middle of a drunken feast when they saw the fingers of a man's hand writing on the wall. The end of the story is that his kingdom was overthrown at a time he least expected. The great flood that overwhelmed the face of the whole earth occurred while people were going about their normal lives. They were marrying and giving in marriage right up to the moment the waters started gushing out of the ground and coming down in torrents during the cloudbursts that followed. The end of time will happen in much the same manner. The Bible tells us it will come "as a thief in the night."

"Dear God, help me not to live carelessly, presuming on your great mercies. May I ever live with godly wisdom and carefulness. Amen!"

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

At the beginning of World War II, Hawaii's overall security posture before Pearl Harbor reflected a dangerous combination of strategic concern and operational complacency. The historical lack of attacks on Hawaii played a significant role in the mindset of American military and political leaders before Pearl Harbor. Hawaii had long been viewed as geographically isolated and naturally protected by the vast Pacific Ocean. Because no foreign power had ever successfully attacked the Hawaiian Islands in modern history, many leaders believed a large-scale strike there was unlikely or impractical.

There was also a broader cultural and strategic mindset shaped by America's relative geographic isolation. Unlike European nations that had experienced repeated invasions and nearby wars, the continental United States and Hawaii had not faced major foreign attacks in generations. This contributed to a degree of complacency and confidence that any enemy action would be detected well before reaching Hawaii.

Even though military exercises and analysts had warned about Pearl Harbor's vulnerability, many senior officers still regarded a direct attack as improbable. Many American officials believed Pearl Harbor's conditions were still different enough to make such an attack ineffective.

As a result, defensive preparations in Hawaii were not maintained at a full wartime footing. Attention was directed more toward sabotage prevention than toward defending against a sudden air assault. Aircraft were clustered together, reconnaissance coverage was incomplete, and anti-aircraft defenses were not fully prepared. In hindsight, the belief that Hawaii's distance and history provided safety became one of the underlying psychological factors that contributed to the surprise and severity of the Pearl Harbor attack.

We can be comfortable in our lives, secure in our historical lack of direct attacks by the enemy, feeling that we have done well in preparing our defenses—confident that our preparations are discouraging the enemy from attacking our souls. We happily engage in spiritual warfare through prayer for those who are constantly on the frontlines. That is similar to the mindset in Hawaii before that fateful attack.

The attack on Pearl Harbor lasted an hour and fifteen minutes. Eight (8) battleships damaged; four (4) of them sunk. A total of 21 ships were sunk or damaged. One hundred eighty-eight (188) aircraft were destroyed, and 159 were damaged, many never even making it off the ground. Two thousand, four-hundred three (2,403) Americans were killed, and 1,178 were wounded—all in the span of an hour and fifteen minutes.

I ask us all to consider—what if the enemy decided to do an all-out frontal assault on our souls, attacking us by air, land, and sea? Using all of his available means to destroy us suddenly and swiftly? Would our spiritual defenses be ready, our spiritual weapons charged and at hand, our prayer and fasting up to date?

—Bro. Eric Doolittle

LESSON 9: AUGUST 30, 2026

THE DANGER OF TRUSTING IN ONE'S ANCESTRY

Matthew 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

John 8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;

32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, *even* God.

42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

43 Why do ye not understand my speech? *even* because ye cannot hear my word.

44 Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

45 And because I tell *you* the truth, ye believe me not.

46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.

48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.

50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad.

57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

MEMORY VERSE: ...If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

—**Philippians 3:4b-7**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

The Pharisees and Sadducees believed that being descendants of Abraham was more important than the gospel Jesus taught. Their bitterness and jealousy blinded their spiritual understanding.

WORD DEFINITIONS

John 8:41 **Not born of fornication:** not of the genealogy of Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, nor of idolatrous ancestry from any other nation. The Jews based their spiritual standing solely on Abraham and Isaac as their ancestors (*Barnes, Clarke, and Henry*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

When God called Abram to leave his birth country and travel to the Land of Promise, He set in motion His plan to create a distinct and peculiar people. God's desire was for a nation that would serve Him wholeheartedly and exclusively.

Over the next two thousand years, the Jews served God at times but often fell into idolatry. Around 539 BC, after their 70-year exile in Babylon, they put away idolatry for good. Over the next several hundred years, a power struggle among Jewish religious leaders gave rise to four main belief systems: the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots. The Pharisees believed in an afterlife and held that oral tradition was equal to the written law given by God through Moses. The Sadducees rejected oral tradition and did not believe in an afterlife. The Essenes lived apart from society and had little influence on the broader Jewish populace. The Zealots largely adhered to Pharisaic beliefs but were militant in their efforts to overthrow Roman rule.

When Jesus began His ministry, the deeply rooted religious institutions united to suppress the threat He posed to their control over the people. His teachings on the forgiveness of sins and loving one's neighbor above oneself sharply contrasted with their values. This hostility from the Jewish leaders ultimately led to His crucifixion.

—C.L.C

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why did John the Baptist call the Pharisees and Sadducees a "generation of vipers"?
2. How did the Pharisees and Sadducees' confidence in Abraham as their father hinder them spiritually?
3. How did their belief system harm the general Jewish populace?
4. Why did trust in ancestral superiority hinder belief in the gospel's truth?
5. What did the Apostle Paul do with his status as "a Hebrew of Hebrews" and his claim of being blameless under the law?
6. How is the saying, "God has no grandchildren" scripturally accurate?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The Orthodox Jewish faith still refuse to acknowledge Jesus, the Son of God, as the Savior of the world. They continue to look for a Messiah who fits their belief system rather than honestly seeking the truth. Adherence to doctrines of men, even if passed down through multiple generations, does not necessarily guarantee that they are based on truth.

During Jesus' trial, the Jewish rulers insisted, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25b). God has honored their callous wish. The Jews have been among the most troubled and ostracized groups known to modern man. Their lot is a good reminder of what is in store for all those who insist on holding to their genealogy rather than seeking the truth with their whole heart.

"Dear Lord, thank you for those who have gone before me and lived faithful, godly lives. Help me not to honor their memory above the atonement provided in your shed blood. Amen."

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

With advancements in DNA technology and the internet, tracing ancestry has become popular and can be fascinating. Understanding your background explains physical traits you possess, why you're inclined to be stoic or hot-headed, and whether you have a strong work ethic or value order. Having ancestors who were Native Americans or African Americans may connect you to a rich cultural heritage. If your relatives came over on the Mayflower or you find they are related to nobility, it carries historical prestige.

The Bible says a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. A family name has significance. If your family heritage includes those who through generations have devoted their lives to the ministry, it is a special privilege. There is a trust and respect that follows, a level of acceptance that someone unknown may not receive as readily. It carries influence and can open doors.

Though heritage can be a blessing, there are dangers. It can bring glory or cause shame through no action of your own. The progeny of Benedict Arnold, whose name became synonymous with treason and betrayal, may weigh differently than being related to George Washington. Another danger can be old family prejudices that pass through generations—think of the Hatfields and McCoy's. And then, spiritually, there is the danger of pride slipping in—or leaning into your heritage rather than into God.

Of a certainty, your family ancestry won't save your soul or guarantee holiness. It's an individual choice to develop a personal relationship with God. A godly life of integrity and service is a torch to be passed from generation to generation. It may be dropped, but can also, through the grace of God, be picked up and rebuilt into something noble. It requires individual commitment to daily abiding in the Lord and following His Word.

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

LESSON 10: SEPTEMBER 6, 2026

THE DANGER OF ABSENCE OF AFFLICTIONS

Job 42:1 Then Job answered the LORD, and said,

2 I know that thou canst do every *thing*, and *that* no thought can be withholden from thee.

3 Who *is* he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

6 Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.

Hebrews 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

MEMORY VERSE: Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. —**Psalm 119:67**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Though Job was considered a “perfect and upright man,” after he was afflicted he gained valuable insights into God’s holiness that he would otherwise have missed had he not suffered the losses and endured the suffering God permitted (Job 1:1; Job 42:6).

The apostle Paul speaks of hard times God’s children go through as a blessing that helps them gain heaven in the end (Hebrews 12).

David realized that his various afflictions and trials were instrumental in keeping him on the right path in life.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Job 42:3 **Hideth counsel without knowledge:** Job acknowledged he had entertained thoughts about God’s dealings that brought darkness to the subject rather than light and understanding (*Barnes*).

Psalm 119:67 **Afflicted:** to bring low, chasten, humble (*Strong’s*).

Psalm 119:67 **Went astray:** to err or sin ignorantly (*Strong’s*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Job was a faithful and God-fearing man. His exemplary life became the subject of debate when God asked the devil whether he had considered his servant Job. The devil accused God of placing a hedge around Job. God then allowed the devil to afflict Job in various ways, beginning with the destruction of his wealth, then the death of all his children, and ending with a terrible affliction of boils from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet.

Throughout Job’s loss and suffering, he refused to charge God foolishly. There were times when Job felt his prayers were not reaching God, yet he kept trusting. At the end of Job’s trial, he realized he had come to know more of God’s fullness and character than he otherwise would have, had he not been afflicted.

Throughout Israel's history, God had to resort to afflicting them in various ways to get their attention. His greatest desire was that they would love and trust Him so they could escape the judgment that comes upon all the ungodly in this life and the afterlife.

David understood that the Lord's chastisement was always given with great love and kindness. The difficulties David faced before ascending the throne helped him avoid some of the same mistakes King Saul had made. David's greatest missteps occurred when things were too easy or after great success. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. How did Job's suffering give him a better perspective of God?
2. How did it change the way he saw himself?
3. In Job 42:5, Job said he had heard of God before, but now he could *see* Him. How much better is it to see God than merely to *hear* of Him?
4. Why does human nature struggle to believe that God's chastening demonstrates His love for us?
5. What usually happens to a child who is never corrected and shielded from all hardship?
6. Why does God not want to "spoil" us by never allowing us to face problems in life?
7. Name a few people you know personally or have heard about who made major spiritual or societal contributions without having had to suffer.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God designed suffering to humble and refine us, not to destroy us. He desires that through hardship, we gain a deeper understanding of His power, wisdom, and love. He knows too well that human nature would not reach its full potential without suffering.

Drill sergeants treat young military recruits harshly because they have their ultimate welfare in mind. They know that if they sent soldiers off to battle without ever having faced difficulty during their training, those soldiers would have no hope of surviving the ravages of war.

Some athletic coaches have been known to be particularly hard on certain players when they saw untapped potential in them that would never be realized without unusually difficult training. The athlete may have felt “picked on” at the time, but afterward they enjoyed the success that would not have been theirs if the coach had been easier on them.

God has special designs for each of His children. He knows exactly what it takes to bring each of us to our full potential in Him. Some of this process involves physical, emotional, and spiritual afflictions. Failures and disappointments will not be uncommon, but in the end, there will be victory through God’s power and grace!

“Dear God, help me be patient with the process you bring me through, even when it involves afflictions. Help me remember that I might miss heaven in the end if not for your great mercy in sending those afflictions. Amen.” —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

This lesson reminds me of my childhood years at home. Mom took her job seriously when the scriptures said that the younger women should marry, bear children, and guide the home.

She probably also saw the verse in Proverbs 29:15. “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.” She determined it would not happen on her watch.

I still remember when she finished with the “rod job,” she would tell me, “I did this because I love you.” I would think, “Surely there’s a better way to express love.”

Today, I am so thankful Mom was determined to guide the home. Hebrews 12:11 is so true. “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” “Exercised thereby” is an accurate way to describe those correction times.

Psalm 119:54-60 “...I thought on my ways and turned my feet...” Correction helped me decide that: Disobedience was not worth it. Don’t think I’ll try that again.

My Heavenly Father can see much farther down the road of life than Mom could see. A verse of a song says, “...sees before me the

dangers prepared, and in mercy His wisdom the flames may have sent that my soul greater woe might be spared.”

“...My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord...for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth...” (Hebrews 12:5b, 6a).

—Bro. Dan Doolittle

LESSON 11: SEPTEMBER 13, 2026

THE DANGER OF SPIRITUAL OR EMOTIONAL BATTLES

Jonah 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that *were* in the ship into the sea, to lighten *it* of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

Luke 22:39 And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.

40 And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,

46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

MEMORY VERSE: Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober. —**1 Thessalonians 5:6**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Jonah attempted to flee from the presence of the Lord when commissioned to preach to the Ninevites. He booked passage at Joppa on a ship bound for Tarshish. After settling in, Jonah soon fell fast asleep. The storm that followed left everyone else despairing of their lives, but Jonah slept on. The shipmaster awoke him and pleaded with him to pray to his God that they might be spared.

Peter, James, and John, Jesus' closest disciples, promised to stay awake and pray for Him during His most difficult struggle. However, when His sweat fell as "great drops of blood" during the agony of prayer, His three friends "slept for sorrow."

WORD DEFINITIONS

Jonah 1:6 **What meanest thou, O sleeper?:** What ails you? (*Barnes*).

Luke 22:45 **He found them sleeping for sorrow:** The disciples were not merely ignorant of their circumstances but so overwhelmed with sorrow that they fell into a deep sleep—a natural response common to mankind in the face of extreme grief (*Barnes*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Nineveh was at the height of its power and wickedness when God told Jonah to preach there. The city and surrounding fields together measured 54 miles in circumference. The walls of the city proper were 100 feet high and wide enough to allow three chariots to run alongside each other. The Ninevite warriors clothed

themselves in scarlet, presumably to hide the sight of their own blood when wounded and to strike terror into the hearts of their opponents. The wickedness of Nineveh was so great that God determined to destroy it; however, He wanted to give them one last chance to repent.

Jonah had the faith and courage to preach in Nineveh, in the end, as shown when he finally did God's will; however, he still lacked love for their souls. This lack of love was first demonstrated when he sought passage on a ship headed in the opposite direction. He wanted to get as far away as he could from God's demonstration of love to these wicked people!

Jesus warned His disciples of His impending death. Even though they could scarcely believe He would die, they were acutely aware of the hatred He faced. As the time drew near for Jesus to face Judas' betrayal and the ensuing trial, Peter, James, and John knew they needed to stay awake and pray for their Friend; yet, they could not remain alert because of their great grief. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Jonah tried doing things his own way at first. Why did this not help him deal with his grief and anger?
2. Why did the shipmaster sense something was wrong with Jonah when he found him asleep in the midst of the horrific storm?
3. Even after being explicitly warned by Jesus to pray that they not enter into temptation, why did the disciples soon fall asleep?
4. What did Jesus tell His disciples after returning and finding them asleep?
5. Why was Jesus so careful to warn His disciples against sleeping at that time?
6. How easy is it to lapse into spiritual lethargy and sleepiness when we face great sorrow or difficulty?
7. How do commonplace coping mechanisms assuage the conscience and mask the symptoms of spiritual sleepiness?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Physical drowsiness and deep sleep during or following extraordinary difficulty is natural. Myotonic goats, also known as

“fainting goats,” have the distinctive trait of appearing to faint when startled or scared. Their legs lock up, and they fall over onto their side or back for a few moments. Watching goats faint can be amusing, but it would not be so funny if the driver of a tour bus fainted during rush hour in inner city traffic.

“Dear Heavenly Father, help me to not allow the length or severity of my spiritual battles to put me to sleep spiritually. Amen!”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

One time when under great stress, both physically and spiritually, I needed to run an errand late at night. The 20-minute drive into town was uneventful. After completing my errand, I stopped and got a drink to help me stay alert on the way back. It helped, but as I was exiting the highway my vision started blurring. I was only a few miles from home and thought surely I could make it back safely. A half mile from home, I fell asleep at the wheel, and the Lord had mercy and woke me before I had a wreck.

Statistics show that driving while drowsy is as dangerous as driving under the influence of alcohol. Drivers who drive while drowsy are nine times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash, and one in five drivers report falling asleep at the wheel every year. Drowsiness impairs our judgment and reaction times, which is especially dangerous while driving.

Our lesson today illustrates the danger of falling asleep due to prolonged stress. Those who are battling afflictions, spiritual struggles, or heartache and grief are very susceptible to becoming spiritually drowsy. Spiritual drowsiness will impair our spiritual judgment and our ability to react or respond with grace in trials. Our spiritual vision may become blurry, and we may “fall asleep,” which can put us in a very dangerous position. How gracious the Lord is to have compassion on us when we are so burdened down and don’t know what to do. Hold on to God, and He will keep holding on to you. —Sis. Sarah Herron

LESSON 12: SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

THE DANGER OF LACK OF SPIRITUAL PURPOSE

2 Samuel 11:1 And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth *to battle*, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

2 And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman *was* very beautiful to look upon.

3 And David sent and enquired after the woman. And *one* said, *Is* not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

4 And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

5 And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, *I am* with child.

6 And David sent to Joab, *saying*, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

7 And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded *of him* how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.

8 And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess *of meat* from the king.

9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.

10 And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from *thy* journey? why *then* didst thou not go down unto thine house?

11 And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? *as* thou livest, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.

12 And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to day also, and to morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow.

13 And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

14 And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah.

15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

16 And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men *were*.

17 And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell *some* of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;

19 And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,

20 And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?

21 Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

22 So the messenger went, and came and shewed David all that Joab had sent him for.

23 And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate.

24 And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and *some* of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

25 Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him.

26 And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

27 And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

MEMORY VERSE: Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger. —**Proverbs 19:15**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

At the usual time that “kings go forth to battle,” David stayed home from the war. Finding himself with no real purpose and restless, David wandered outside on his rooftop. While on the rooftop, David fell into a dreadful and shameful trap that cascaded into a chain of sins.

WORD DEFINITIONS

2 Samuel 11:1 **At the time when kings go forth to battle:** usually, the fall or springtime. In this case, it was most likely springtime (*Clarke*).

2 Samuel 11:1 **David tarried still at Jerusalem:** The Syrians had been subdued the year before. The present war with Ammon was deemed not to require David’s personal presence (*Barnes*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

God granted great victories to David and Israel in the years preceding the events recorded in 2 Samuel 11. After King Saul’s death, David reigned for seven years in Hebron, then over all twelve tribes when Abner helped unite them behind David.

Immediately after hearing of David’s accession as king over all Israel, the Philistines encamped against Israel. God granted a great victory over the Philistines. Soon after, David brought the Ark to Jerusalem. After God had given David rest from battle for a while, David desired to build a house for the Lord. The Lord told David he could not build the house, but his son would. At this time, the Lord made an everlasting covenant with David.

David again waged military campaigns against the Philistines, then against Ammon and Syria. The Syrians suffered such a defeat

that they made peace with Israel and resolved never to help the children of Ammon again.

The scriptures do not explain the reasoning behind David's decision to stay behind when the armies of Israel began their spring military campaign against Ammon the following year. Perhaps David felt that God had so wonderfully blessed him up to this point that it was unnecessary for him to go to battle. It is also possible that David's advisors thought he needed to take it a little easier. After all, he had lived very rigorously up to this point—running for his life from King Saul for several years, then engaging in numerous military campaigns after coming to the throne. Whatever the case, David was home when he would normally have been busy with what was then considered a king's business, leading his troops in battle. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. For the first time, David sent Joab and the army into battle without going himself. How relieved do you think David felt at first when he saw the troops leave without him?
2. After a little time had passed and the lack of productive activity had settled in, how do you suppose David began to feel?
3. What state of mind was David most likely in by the time he saw the woman from his rooftop?
4. Describe the entire chain of events that began with the seemingly insignificant decision to “take it easy” and not go to battle and culminated in David having a man killed to cover his own sin.
5. Why does one sin generally lead to another, and another, and another?
6. How can too much ease be dangerous to us emotionally and spiritually?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The Old Testament contains many types and shadows that point to spiritual applications for our New Testament time. The untimely physical rest David took, to his detriment, points directly to the danger we face today if we “take our ease” spiritually rather than remaining diligent in defeating the many enemies of our souls.

Advertisements of all kinds abound on every hand, claiming, "You deserve this product or service!" Our modern culture specializes in ease and luxury as we journey toward the end goal of "having it made." Retirement is often portrayed as a time when we can sit back, enjoy the good life, and do only what pleases us.

The atmosphere of temporal and physical ease can easily migrate into society's spiritual attitude, and, by proxy, have a detrimental effect on those striving to live godly lives. The question we must continually ask ourselves is, "Will I allow it to affect me as well?"

"Dear Lord, please help me remain faithful despite the culture of ease and affluence that permeates our modern society. Amen!"

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

I'm reminded of a time when my wife and I were going to be gone for the day and our boys were left in the care of my wife's mother at our house. For those that don't know, we raised four sons. They were young at this time; the oldest was around fourteen years old and the youngest was about five years old. I made a list of jobs that they were to do while we were away. Most of them were designated to a specific boy. My mother-in-law read through the list and looked at me and said; "There is no way that they can get all of this done!" I responded, "That's the point! I want them to be busy until I get home." As I father, I knew that idle hands would find mischief.

Meaningful activity is the best antidote for a lot of negative things. IF, David had been busy with his men he would not have been tempted, or even have been in a position to be tempted. When we are actively engaged in the "master's service," then our potential for failure is significantly reduced. —Bro. Dan Adams

LESSON 13: SEPTEMBER 27, 2026

THE DANGER OF GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT

2 Samuel 15:1 And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

2 And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was *so*, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city *art* thou? And he said, Thy servant *is* of one of the tribes of Israel.

3 And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters *are* good and right; but *there is* no man *deputed* of the king to hear thee.

4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

5 And it was *so*, that when any man came nigh *to him* to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

6 And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

7 And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron.

8 For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.

9 And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.

10 But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

11 And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, *that were* called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.

12 And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, *even* from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

2 Samuel 16:23 And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, *was* as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so *was* all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

MEMORY VERSE: Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life. — **Proverbs 13:12**

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Absalom allowed his smoldering disdain for his father, King David, to escalate into open revolt. Apparently knowing of Ahithophel's secret disenchantment with King David, Absalom asked him to join the conspiracy.

WORD DEFINITIONS

2 Samuel 15:7 **Forty years:** Most Bible scholars agree that the translation should have been four years. This would account for the three years Absalom spent in exile with his grandfather, the king of Geshur, and a year after his return (*Clarke*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Absalom's sister, Tamar, was violated by Absalom's half-brother, Amnon, eight years before Absalom revolted against King David, their father. 2 Samuel 13:21 tells us that soon after learning what Amnon had done, David was "very wroth." The Septuagint and Vulgate translations of this passage, along with Josephus' writings, add, "but he would not grieve the soul of Amnon his son, for he loved him because he was his firstborn" (*TSK Cross References*). David's inaction affected Absalom far more than he let on at first. He took Tamar into his own household and waited to see what would happen. After two years, Absalom invited all his brothers to a feast at the sheepshearing, where he had arranged for his brother, Amnon, to be killed. Absalom then fled the country to seek asylum with his grandfather, the king of Geshur.

2 Samuel 11:3 tells us that Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, was the daughter of Eliam. In 2 Samuel 23:34, we learn that Eliam was the

son of Ahithophel, David's chief counselor. The scriptures give no indication of Ahithophel's initial reaction when David took advantage of his granddaughter, Bathsheba, three years before Amnon's actions, but it can be assumed that Ahithophel and Absalom discussed both events. Absalom knew Ahithophel's feelings well enough to risk asking him to join the revolt against King David. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What justification did Absalom and Ahithophel have for being bitterly disappointed with David's inaction regarding Amnon and Tamar?
2. How difficult would it be for Ahithophel, David's chief counselor, to see his granddaughter, Bathsheba, being taken advantage of by David?
3. How could the fact that David was king exacerbate Ahithophel's grievance, even though David repented and was forgiven by God?
4. How difficult can it be when someone in authority violates the trust and respect given by those under their authority?
5. Ahithophel waited eleven years, and Absalom waited eight years before they joined forces in open revolt against King David's throne. Why did the passage of time intensify their anger rather than diminish it?
6. Given the fates of both Absalom and Ahithophel, how dangerous can deep disappointment be if we do not allow God to heal it?
7. What should Ahithophel and Absalom have done to be healed by God emotionally and spiritually, rather than the steps they took that led to their deaths?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Researchers of human behavior have found that people who "ruminate" over their grievances, rather than release their hurts as soon as possible, experience chemical surges in their brains. These surges create an addiction that perpetuates their obsession with the problem they cannot fix. They become convinced, however, that thinking about it and staying angry about it long enough will somehow solve the problem.

This research uncovered biblical truths that say the same thing. Hebrews 12:15 says, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” Not only will the individual who harbors bitterness experience trouble, but many others will be harmed as well.

Bitterness and disenchantment, brought on by a great, unresolved disappointment, are a slow, painful emotional and spiritual disease that saps the joy of salvation from the souls of those who neglect to ask God to heal their wounded hearts. The long trail of history is littered with grim reminders of this sad fact.

“Dear Heavenly Father, help me release my disappointment to you rather than let it destroy me and those I love. Amen!”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

Disappointments can cause discouragement and lack of faith. The devil can use them to challenge our faith! As long as things are going as anticipated, our confidence and hope soar high! But when disappointment comes, a dark cloud can cover us, creating a situation that can cause us to fall into despair. He will present doubts about God’s care and willingness to help us in these times.

We must fight against it and not allow these circumstances to lull us into a sleepy state of despair. The outcome will be a loss of interest in God. Worldly pleasures and ambitions can take over.

It takes a fight to maintain our love for God during times of disappointment. The enemy wants to use these situations to draw our minds and our hearts away from God. He uses such thoughts as, “You might as well...” to turn our minds away from trusting and believing in God’s intervention.

Job’s wife was an example of this way of thinking when she told Job, “...curse God and die...” But Job fought back with, “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women...” No doubt, she had experienced many emotions, and disappointment was probably one of them. It probably felt as though God had forsaken them.

When disappointments come our way, we need to recognize them as a potential avenue for the devil to lull us into spiritual sleepiness. It is a state of no longer being interested in the things of

God, one of no longer caring about the things that are most important for our eternal life. When we are asleep, we are not aware of reality. It is the same way with spiritual sleepiness. Our minds do not take in the reality of how important our connection with God is to our eternal life.

Ultimately, we must not allow disappointments to have this effect on us. We must maintain an awareness of the potential dangers associated with these situations and be prepared to fight against the enemy who will use them to destroy us.

—Sis. Doris Clay

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