

November 1, 2015

What Are You Becoming?

Titus 3:3-7

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

What will your _____ be like in ten years? What will your character _____ about you? Today we're thinking about the _____. We know the Bible is God's _____ for us today. It has promises and blessings for those who take time to _____ it. It tells us of the glory and beauty of being in _____ with God. We want you to have those blessings and enjoy those _____. We can do _____ more important, more needed, or more valuable than studying the Scriptures.

Thirty years ago I _____ a remarkable man named Claire Annis. In our first visit he sparked my interest in a _____ he had heard, but he kept me waiting anxiously for thirty minutes before he revealed what that question was. It's a question that still, after all of these years, _____ me. Claire was a very driven man for the Lord, mailing out more than ten million gospel tracts or brochures all over the world to anyone who asked, and he did it at his own _____. These brochures reached thousands of _____ and helped establish many churches. He wrote them and printed them himself out of his garage. He was a man who put the Lord _____ and sacrificed.

Before he told me the question, he said that this question had burned in his _____ for days. I really wanted to know what that question was and I nearly _____ him to tell me. He said it had only _____ words: "What are you becoming?" The fact is that we're _____ in the state of becoming something.

We can easily lose _____ of what our lives are becoming. Some grow _____, while others grow _____. Some grow more _____, and some grow more _____. What are you becoming?

Our reading today is about the mighty man Sampson who had a weakness. It comes from Judges 16:18-21. That is a story of a good man who became something he didn't want to be.

Life is full of _____. Some _____ us, while others challenge us. Some _____ us become better people, while others _____ down our resistance to evil. Things rarely stay the _____ for long periods of time, even when there's a conscious effort to keep them the same. Changes in the things around us can and do bring changes in our hearts and sometimes our _____. Some of these changes are for our good, while others not so good. Because changes take place _____, they aren't easily perceived. People can mindlessly _____ to lifestyles that they would never have chosen earlier. They slowly become what they never _____ to be.

In this study, we'll look into the life of Samson, a man who underwent some _____ changes and became what he didn't _____ to be. Judges 16:4-19 tells the story: "After this he (Samson)

_____ a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, 'Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may _____ him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we'll each give you 1,100 pieces of silver.' So Delilah said to Samson, 'Please tell me where your great _____ lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you.' Samson said to her, 'If they bind me with seven fresh _____ that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.' Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she _____ him with them. Now she had men lying in _____ in an inner chamber. And she said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' But he _____ the bowstrings, as a thread of flax snaps when it touches the fire. So the _____ of his strength was not known.

"Then Delilah said to Samson, 'Behold, you've mocked me and told me _____. Please tell me how you might be bound.' And he said to her, 'If they bind me with new _____ that have not been used, then I shall become _____ like any other man.' So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' And the men lying in ambush were in an inner chamber. But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread.

"Then Delilah said to Samson, 'Until now you've mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound.' And he said to her, 'If you weave the seven _____ of my head with the web and fasten it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.' So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and _____ them into the web. And she made them tight with the pin and said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' But he awoke from his sleep and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web.

"And she said to him, 'How can you say, 'I _____ you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these _____ times, and you've not told me where your great strength lies.' And when she pressed him _____ with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death. And he told her all his heart, and he said to her, 'A _____ has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man.' When Delilah saw that he had _____ her all his heart, she sent and she called the lords of the Philistines, saying, 'Come up again, for he has told me all his heart.' Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the _____ in their hands. She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him _____ off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to _____ him, and his strength left him."

God gave Samson the _____ of strength and up until this time Samson had served God and judged Israel for twenty years. His desire for the ladies though got him into _____. He loved Delilah, who _____ him out to his enemies. She doggedly searched for the secret of his great strength to _____ him. She used her _____ and whined until Samson revealed his secret. You'd think Samson would get _____ to her tricks. You'd think he'd send her away and tell her _____. Three times she said, "The Philistines are upon you"; but he didn't pay _____. Her persistence was greater than his common sense or his moral strength; she _____ him.

After his strength left him, Judges 16:20-21 says: “And she said, ‘The Philistines are upon you, Samson!’ And he awoke from his sleep and said, ‘I’ll go out as at other times and shake myself _____.’ But he didn’t know that the Lord had _____ him. And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his _____ and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. And he ground at the mill in the _____.”

Samson lost _____ than his hair. Samson _____ what he never intended to be or wanted to be. He was now blind, a prisoner, and out of _____ with God. How did this happen? Sensuality had gradually _____ his resistance to Delilah’s charms, so he told her the secret. The pleasure of _____ dulls our commitment to righteousness and causes us to forget God.

Samson was not like Joseph. Joseph was constantly pressed by Potiphar’s wife to _____. **Read Genesis 39:8-10.** Joseph _____ temptation.

Like Delilah, the devil looks for our _____ spots. We must be alert and strong. **Read 1 Peter 5:8-9.** We can overcome the devil if we stay _____ to God like Joseph did. James 4:7-8 says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will _____ from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”

Samson had a cavalier _____. He took for granted his physical strength and that it would always save him; but he _____ himself. God was the true _____ of Samson’s strength. First Corinthians 10:12 reminds us, “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he _____.” Samson fell to sin, and it can happen to you or to me. A thought can become an act; an act can develop into a habit; a habit can shape a character; and our character determines our _____.

Change may come about so gradually one may not _____ what’s happening. An alcoholic will hardly _____ he’s an alcoholic. He thinks he’s in _____, when he isn’t. A Christian who’s overcome by moral error will think he’s all _____. He doesn’t know the Lord has departed from him. **Read how Hebrews 3:12-13 warns Christians.**

People can _____ from the spiritual to the fleshly, from loving to selfishness, from being careful to being careless, from being committed to being indifferent, from being holy to being ungodly, from being involved to getting distracted, from being wise to being foolish, from having faith to having doubts, and then losing all faith, and from being responsible to being irresponsible.

What are you becoming? Because of Delilah, Samson became spiritually _____, unfit to judge Israel, and he disgraced himself. **Read Hebrews 2:1-3.**

If Samson’s story ended here, it would really be _____; but something happened to Samson to bring him back to God. Stories don’t have to end without _____! Judges 16:22 says, “But the hair of his head began to _____ again after it had been shaved.” Samson came back to God and learned to _____ on Him! Hebrews 11:32 lists Samson as a _____ of faith. What Samson became in the end is the reason why!

Judges 16:23-30 says “Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great _____ to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, ‘Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand.’ And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, ‘Our god has given our _____ into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us.’ And when their hearts were merry, they said, ‘Call Samson, that he may _____ us.’ So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars. And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, ‘Let me feel the pillars on which the house _____, that I may lean against them.’ Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained. Then Samson _____ to the LORD and said, ‘O Lord GOD, please _____ me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.’ And Samson _____ the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. And Samson said, ‘Let me _____ with the Philistines.’ Then he bowed with all of his _____, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.”

Samson prayed for strength while listening to the blasphemies of the Philistines praising Dagon and mocking the Lord God. God _____ his prayer. Samson _____ his sight, his freedom, his relationship with God, and his dignity. But it was at the bottom where he learned to _____ on and trust in God. Sometimes it takes hard things to _____ us back to God! To grow closer to God takes conscious, meaningful _____ on our part! It takes courage and discipline.

The most successful people frequently don’t _____ they’re successful; they simply keep on doing what they have always been doing and make a powerful impact on the lives around them. Some people who find success easily don’t realize how vulnerable they are to the influences of the _____. To be a great servant of Christ takes _____ and effort! What are you doing with your life? What are you becoming?

The question my friend asked me is the simplest of questions, found in the _____ of every person from a little child to the wisest elder. “What will _____ of what I am doing today or tomorrow? What will come of my whole _____?” **Read how the Bible answers this question in Romans 2:6-11.**

So, I ask you, “What are you becoming?” What will God _____ to you when this life is over? If you _____ going the spiritual direction that you’re going right now, where will you be in five, ten, or twenty years? Will you be _____ to God or _____ away? Will you be _____ to His will, or will you ignore Him, or will you rebel against Him? What are you becoming? Your direction will not change until you _____ to change. If you let _____ influence you in the wrong direction, you may end up sliding down a path that you’ll regret. How sad it would be to wake up lost and not know the Lord had _____ you! Do you need to get right with God?

If you wish to become a Christian, _____ with all your heart in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, turn from your sins in _____ and turn to the Lord, _____ that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and be _____ into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Do it today!