

**THE
BON AIR
PULPIT**

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Scripture: Judges 16:15-22

Sermon: I Can Take Care of Myself

Called the Angelic Fallacy. It was devised by a Quaker theologian Elton Trueblood who said that many individuals forget that they are human and begin to think that they are angels. And because they think they are angels they overestimate their own strength, underestimate the adversaries and they fall into deep difficulties. I have known many individuals who have had the angelic fallacy. The person in the Bible who perhaps illustrates it best is a character in the old testament by the name of Sampson. All of the children even know about Sampson. He is one of the physically strongest men who ever lived. When you read through the Bible and see some of his physical exploits you wonder how in the world could he ever do that and yet he was a man who at the end of his life crashed and burned. He thought that because he was physically strong that he was spiritually strong. He had the old philosophy I can handle anything but what he didn't know was that he couldn't, and it's one of the most tragic stories in the Bible.

Now the passage of scripture I am going to read today is from the book of Judges, Chapter 16 beginning at verse 15. All of you remember that he became involved with a lady by the name of Delilah. Sampson was using Delilah. He wasn't aware that Delilah was using him. And what she was trying to find out is how was he so strong. If you remember in the Bible it says that he was a Nazarite. A Nazarite was a person who simply dedicated himself to God completely and that a symbol of that dedication was that he did not cut his hair. Now his strength wasn't in his hair, his strength was in his commitment to God and he would take the opportunity never to cut it because if he did that would just show people that really his commitment to God had been broken. But he kept playing games with her. She was being used by the Philistines to try to find out and he would tell her all kinds of things and never the truth. And so we come now down to verse 15. Then she said to him, "How can you say I love you when you will not confide in me." This is the third time he had been playing all kinds of games with her. This is the third time you have made a fool of me and you haven't told me the secret of your great strength. With nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death. So he told her everything. No razor has ever been used on my head because I am a Nazarete set apart for God since birth. If my head were shaved my strength would leave me, I would become as weak as any other man. When Delilah saw that he had told her everything she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines come back once more, he's told me everything. So the rulers of the Philistines returned with a silver in their hands, having put him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to shave off his hair. And so began to subdue him and his strength left him. Then she called Sampson the Philistine's are upon you. He awoke from his sleep and he thought I will go out and I will be like I was before but he did not know that the Lord had left him. Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes, took him down to Guizer, banded him with bronze shackles. They set him to grinding like a mule in the prison.

One of the reasons that you and I have the angelic fallacy is that we do not understand our enemies, we simply think that we are strong enough to handle anything and not aware of how strong the enemies are. So I wanted to take a moment to remind you of the three great enemies that you face. The first one that you face the Bible calls is yourself and that is that God has put inside of you emotions and opportunities to make choices and that there is something within us that makes us sometime go against what we know is right and what we know is best and we go ahead and do it anyway. So our problem is not information, our problem is many times that even though we know better, something inside of us reaches out. The Bible often calls it like a fish going after a bait and something in us like a fish makes us want to go after the bait and makes us want to do things that we know we ought not to do.

This has been an unusual week for your staff in that I ask them to go with me to a national leadership conference. And so for about four days this week all of your staff has been with me. One of the largest churches in America is called the Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago and one of the best known ministers in America these days is Bill Hybles who is the Pastor of that Church. And so we have been gone

and did not get in until about 8:30 last night. The conference was a mix between leadership training and a renewal time. Bill Hybles was in a conference one day and had the opportunity to hear the President of the United States speak. Because he is so well known, the President knew who he was, he went over after the conference and he said, "I have just gone through this terrible event in my life and I realize that I need spiritual counselors and I wanted to ask you if you would come every month to Washington and I will give you an hour and I want to sit down and talk with you an hour a month." Now I don't quite understand why the President came to the leadership conference except the fact that Bill Hybles has been meeting with him now for over two years once a month for an hour, but anyway he was there. And Bill Hybles began to talk with him about the difficulty that he had gone through, wasn't much politics, it was more about his spiritual journey and the fact that he had run into a great deal of difficulty. What I found was so fascinating was that in the middle of it, he turned and he said, "You know I do not have anybody to blame but myself." That is true of everybody in this room. The time and time again we have done things and we have looked back on it and we say, we don't have anybody to blame but us. There is something inside of us that makes us do things that in our better moments we would never think about doing but we go ahead and do them anyway. The Bible says that there is an enemy that you face and the enemy is yourself. There is a second enemy that we face the Bible calls it culture or the world. Now sometimes we would never do things by ourselves but if somebody else comes to us and says we are going to do it, it is that we thing that seems to attract us and we will go ahead and do things if we know somebody else will do it. A young person could come to Sunday School this morning and his mother and daddy would think that he was sitting in Sunday School when really he is not. And the reason he is not in Sunday School is because a couple of fellows came up to him and said, "You know we are going to" and then all of a sudden they are gone for an hour and then they come back. Now that young person would never think about doing that except the word we, and you have come to find out that in an effort to try to get along with people, to be a part of the group, to have somehow a sense of belonging, you will sometimes sacrifice great principles in your life and you will go ahead and do things that you never, never thought that you would do. How many times have I heard parents tell to me, I have a great young person but they got in with the wrong crowd. And in spite of all of what mother and daddy may tell them they are going to do something else because somehow the crowd appeal will make them to do what they need to do.

And there is a third enemy that all of us face and the Bible calls that the Devil. When I was in elementary school we put on a morality play at our school. I have never understood why but I was chosen to play the devil and my mom made my costume and we use to call them long handle underwear. We've got a more polite term these days but—She dyed it red and she put little horns on me and made me a little spear and fork and so I danced around on the stage. Now the problem with that is after the play is over you've got to wear that thing home. And so after I got off the stage I was trying my best to hide behind my mother. I always remember what people said to my mother as they passed by. They said, "Isn't he cute". Oh I was! I was the devil incarnate. It's not too bad to try to compliment a mother about a little elementary school kid in a play but the problem is that we adults keep saying the same thing. We keep talking about the devil and saying isn't he cute.

Not long ago we had a person to come to speak at our church and I was to pick him up and bring him here and the airplane was late so I didn't get him to the hotel until about midnight. At midnight while he was checking in and I was making sure that he was alright, three fellows came out of the hotel and they were so drunk they could hardly walk. Two fellows were holding up one fellow in the middle and they were saying things like this, "Man, you can drink us under the table anytime. You da man, you da man," and they did nothing but compliment on him that he had drunk more than anybody else and they said, "My goodness, everybody better watch out tonight, because we are getting ready to go home." He was the young man that probably was in serious trouble but his buddies thought, isn't he cute. And most of us never take seriously the real enemies that we confront. Now if I came to you today and I said, "I have come to realize that you are sick and you need to go to the hospital," and you say to me, "Why do I need to go to the hospital, I'm getting along pretty good." And until you are convinced that you are sick enough to go to the hospital I doubt if you are going to go. If you come to church and I tell you that there are problems and enemies that you confront that will destroy you and that what you need is a savior to enable you to overcome your enemies and unless you understand the depth of the problem that you have then you probably will never come to Jesus. And so one of the great things that needs to happen in your live is to come to understand a realistic view of who you are and what you confront and the fact that everybody in this room really needs help. But you see we just keep playing with this old thing and the fallacy is I can take

care of myself, I don't need any help, I can take care of myself. I went down to visit one of my brothers a couple of years ago and we were driving down the road in a community that I knew and I saw a for sale sign on a house and I knew who lived in that house and I said, "Oh", I said, "Are they moving?" He said, "yea" he said, "the man died last year and the wife is selling the house" and I said, "Oh, I said, "Well I guess she is going to live close to her kids". He said, "No, let me show you" and he drove me on a couple of miles later and there was a new area and there was a trailer and he said, "She is going to live there". I said, "She can't live there." I mean I knew who they were, I knew that he was one of the richest men in our community. I said, "What happened, did his business go bad, you know did something happen in the transfer of the money, the money didn't go to her, I said, "What happened?"

In my home town which is by the Mississippi River there is riverboat gambling. If they can't get you on the ground, they get you on the water. So you just go over the levy and go on a boat and you gamble. This woman probably in her grief and probably never having to deal with that much money, in six months, they robbed her of eight million dollars and the woman that I have known all my life, whose living in one of the finest homes in that area, will spend the rest of her life on supplementary income living in a trailer. Who would give away everything they have in the lure of trying to get something else. You see, I have spent a lifetime of people coming to me and saying, "I never meant to do that", "I never meant to get in this circumstance". In my larger family one of my close family members called me and said, "Will you come back home for a while." And I sat down by the side of one of the people in our larger family, thirty years old, bright young fellow and I was the one who was holding his hand when he died of aids and hearing his mama say, "He never took it seriously". And somehow we just believe we can take care of ourselves. So four million Americans would give away everything they had if they could get something else on the gambling table and that many million Americans can't function because somebody said, "You're the man and let them drink until they've got a problem." And now this many million Americans are hooked on the internet pornography. It's not strange to me when I come to church then and I look out over a congregation and maybe if those are not your problems I want to tell you if you are pretty honest then there is something else that is eating at you and how easy it is to get on something because you think that you can handle yourself. I am the Sampson and I can take care of me. What they didn't know, Sampson didn't know the whole time he was being used and bounced around like a rubber ball and he ended up as a blind weakling working like a mule.

Now with that part, let me tell you some things that I want you to walk out the door with. First thing is, be very careful about your love life, be very careful about who you fall in love with, because you will do things in love you would never do under any other circumstance. Sampson probably thought he loved Delilah, he tried to act like he loved her even though he was using her. But he was willing to tell her some things that really violated the very basis of who he was. And so I always say to young girls, if you are going out with somebody and they are doing things that you know have the possibility of real trouble then you better take care of that problem before you continue the relationship. If you think that you can get in the relationship and that by your charm you are going to be able to work everything out, then you are probably making the same mistake that Sampson did. Be very careful who you fall in love with, be very careful who you get involved with, particularly if you begin to sense that there are difficulties and problems. Make sure you take care of it before you continue. The second thing you need to walk out the door with: Do not expose yourself to people who will use you. Delilah was beating Sampson like a drum and if you think that you live in a world that doesn't have those kind of people, then you haven't been around very much.

In this auditorium a couple of months ago we showed a film about great revivals, great movements of God around the world. And one of those places is Coley, Columbia. It is a center of drug trafficking but people in the city who are Christians have become so burdened about that, that they have been praying and revival has been happening and it actually showed a soccer stadium full of 70,000 Christians who had been praying all night long and what had happened was that much of the drug culture had had to go other places. What has happened since, is that five of the ministers who organized that prayer meeting in the Coley soccer stadium have been assassinated. Missionaries have had to leave Coley because they get regular death threats from drug pushers and that much of the literal stability of the country of Columbia is in difficulty and if it falls to drug lords then much of the countries around it will fall and it will deeply affect this country. On a national television program one of the drug lords, you know in the black so you can't see his face, was asked, "Does it ever bother you that what you are growing and selling and making millions of dollars profit on, does it ever bother you that you are hurting somebody else." I want you to listen to what

he said, "No, if they want to buy it, then all I am doing is selling it." And you need to understand there are people who can look you in the eye and can literally destroy your life and never blink an eye. I have shared with you at other times that I am personally aware of individuals throughout this community who can pop their trunk and a teenager can reach in and get something else and pop the trunk back down and they are gone and all they think about is the sucker who came by. Never bothers them. Don't expose yourself to people who will use you.

The third thing I want you to walk out the door with. A broken relationship with God always invites weakness. Immediately when Sampson's hair, which was his commitment to God, when that was taken the Bible says he became weak like everybody else. At the close of this service we are going to sing a song. It says this, *I Need You Every Hour*. If you wake up tomorrow and think you are in charge, you are in trouble. You let that go a week and you are in serious trouble. You let that go a month and you are in deep trouble. You let it go on for years and you are inviting disaster. That's the reason the Bible says that one day out of seven take time off, go worship me, learn of me, develop, get your mind on me. We have many church members that don't come one day out of seven, they don't come one month out of seven. And the reason they do is I can take care of me.

Fourth thing – don't ever get to the place where you think you can handle any situation. My, when you do that you are just inviting disaster. The last one. You need to check if your ego is so big that it always needs to be fed. A young man that walked out of the Holiday Inn the night I was there I don't know if he would have drunk if the two fellows on the side hadn't said, "Boy I tell you, you can drink us under the table." Why do we have to feel that somehow by doing that which we know is wrong that it gives us a sense of being somebody. What do you need to make you feel that you are really somebody, do you have to drive so fast that you put everybody in danger on the road, do you have to drink, do you have to put something in your body. What do you have to do? Could you not ever come to the point where you say, "I am somebody because God says I am somebody, I don't have to do all of these things to make me feel that I am somebody."

We have all kinds of folk in our church and I am grateful that our congregation is very diverse but there is one thing that every one of us who are inside the church share in common. One day whether here or somewhere we walk down an aisle of a church like this and this is what we said, "I cannot make it by myself, I can't handle me, I can't handle culture, I can't handle the devil, and dear God I come broken and I come weak and I come empty, and I need you." That's what it means to confess. Confess means, con is with, and fess is say. When you confess you say with God what's true about you. You see, God knows what you are and when you confess what you are doing is that you are just agreeing with God.

I mentioned to you last week as a sophomore in college, I said with God what He already knew about me and that was that left to myself I was going to end up like a Sampson. Sometime people come to a church like this and I've had people look around and say, "You know I would like to keep coming there but it looks like all those folk got it together and I don't have it together. No, the truth is we just all realize that we have been sick and we just found out where the doctor is. And what I wanted to ask you today is, "Have things so happened in your life that you are willing to join the rest of us and confess and say, "Dear God, without you I can't do it".

Now given a lot of bad news today, let me close with great news. Great news is this, regardless of how big the enemy is, Jesus is bigger. Jesus is bigger and that whatever is in you, around you, over you, trying to destroy you, there is a Christ who came to help you to become what you can become and what God wants you to be. And the reason I stand and literally plead for people's souls every week is because I know that Jesus is adequate for any person in any circumstance and can get you to live like you would like to live. And that's the reason I ask you to come to Christ.

As you know we close our service every Sunday by singing a hymn of invitation. How appropriate *I Need You Every Hour*. I wanted to ask you to come and confess. I wanted to ask you to come to Christ. I wanted to ask those of you who are already believers to come to be a part of our fellowship, because you see, you need the strength week by week and I wanted to ask you to come. So we are going to stand and we are going to sing. If you need to confess your faith in Christ, if you need to come to move your life and membership and say I want to be a part of the church, then I am here to greet you and to welcome you and to rejoice that you have come. Will you? Let's stand together and let's sing.