

THE POWER OF ONE (PART 2)

BY GUY HAMMOND

It has always seemed incredible to me that God needs people. Throughout history, God has always had a plan, but in order for his plan to work, he has always relied on imperfect individuals to carry out the plan. In our previous devotional we considered how Daniel, one young man, had the power to change his world because of his one act of dedication. Here are two other examples of those who understood the Power of One!

The power of one act of zeal.

Talk about the power of one man! Israel had gathered to be punished for their sin because some of the Israelite men had been having sex with some local Moabite women and had then bowed down and worshipped the Moabite gods. As Moses was about to address the people, shockingly, a shameless Israelite man decided to indulge in wickedness right in front of everyone by actually bringing a Midianite woman through the crowd, right into his tent so that he could have sex with her. Phinehas, Aaron's grandson and Moses' great nephew was horrified by this brazen act and took matters into his own hands.

Numbers 25:7-12 records what happened next. *"When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand and followed the Israelite into the tent. He drove the spear through both of them—through the Israelite and into the woman's body. Then the plague against the Israelites was stopped; but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000. The LORD said to Moses, "Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for my honor among them, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them."*

God was moved by the passion of this man. Because of his fervor for the Lord, he saved a nation and moved God to relent of his anger to stop a plague. He was promoted by God himself and in fact, was eventually appointed the third High Priest of Israel, and served at the sanctuary of Bethel. (Judges 20:28)

Funk and Wagnall's dictionary provides this definition for the word 'zeal'. "Ardor for a cause, Enthusiastic devotion; fervor." A closer rendering to the original translation of the word 'zeal' in Numbers 25 is 'jealous'. Phinehas was jealous for God.

The power of one last exploit.

Samson is an enigma to me. The man was courageous and powerful, yet seemingly as dumb as a doorknob at the same time. How on earth one man could be so stupidly fooled, time and time again as he was by Delilah is astounding to me. A quick read of Judges 16 will leave you shaking your head in disbelief. He was apparently all brawn and no brains. I suppose that should give some of us men hope (author excluded, of course). So let's give the guy his due and look at his brawn side first.

He killed a lion with his bare hands as one might have torn a young goat, he caught 300 foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs, then fastened a torch to every pair of tails, lit them, and let the foxes loose thereby burning up all the fields, vineyards, and olive groves of the Philistines. The Philistines murdered his wife, and father-in-law in retaliation, so Samson took a “fresh” jawbone of a donkey, and struck down a thousand men. Think of that: 1,000 to 1, and the 1 wins.

Yet in spite of his unfathomable acts of bravery, look where sin took him. He fell hard and fast and had to suffer the consequences. Because the elevator apparently didn't go all the way to the top for poor Samson, (again, read Judges 16), he was captured by the enemy whereby he had his eyes gouged out and was then thrown into a dungeon to be forgotten about forever. In captivity, now blind and with his head shaved, his greatness was apparently gone forever. What a seemingly sad ending to a remarkable life. Yet God wasn't done with him yet.

There was the Power of One last exploit. Judges 16:25-30 records how Samson was brought out to entertain thousands of Philistines. Being placed between the pillars that supported the temple, Samson prayed for strength just one more time, then bracing himself, pushed with all his might, collapsing the pillars and killing everyone inside, including himself. I love how that passage ends, “Thus he killed many more when he died than when he lived.”

Sometimes we can feel washed up, like maybe God can't use us any more. Maybe you've had a bad month, a bad year, or God forbid, a bad decade! You may feel too young or too old or too sinful to be used by God. We need to see that Samson was more useful at the end of his life, during one last great exploit that led to death, than he ever was alive.

With God, you're never too old, too washed up, too sinful. Regardless of your standing right now, no matter what you've been through in life, God isn't done with you yet; provided you're willing to let him use your life to do something for him. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. It's for sinners that the church exists, for those who have hit the bottom, and who have no where else to turn. We can get lost thinking that we are insignificant. In the grand scheme of things, does it really matter what role I play in the church. Does it matter how much I participate? Does it really matter if I am righteous? It is to Satan's credit that he can so often trivialize the significance of the role each of us plays in the church.

Romans 4:17 says “*He is “the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.”* That's what I love about God. He has the incredible ability to believe in us when no one else does. He sees the built up possibilities and talents that each of us has and dreams of us doing great things with them.

Bar none, my favorite passage in scripture is 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 because it reminds me that when we are weak, that's when God starts working. “*To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

I know that you most likely do not know me personally, but I am a large man. I stand at 6 feet, 4 inches tall and weigh in at . . . well, that's really none of your business. I outsize most people around me, both in height and girth, but the truth is, I am a weak and feeble man. I am sinful; I have failed many, many

times. In spite of my best efforts to be righteous, I have continued to fall so short of who I wish I could be. Throw in with that the insecurities I sometimes feel in regard to my homosexual past or same gender attraction, and I really am a weak man. But that is okay in God's eyes; that's when He loves to step in and do His best work. He's not done with me yet, and He's not done with you either.

Will you be dedicated to God, even when it seems that no one else around you is? Will you be zealous for God in terms of personal righteousness and your desire to see the lost brought to Christ and care more about His cause than your own? Will you trust that God is not done with you, no matter where you are in your life?

Remember Daniel and the power of one act of dedication. Remember Phinehas and the power of one act of zeal. Remember Samson and the power of one last exploit. Remember the Power of One.

Thoughts presented in this devotional are taken from the book *MESSED UP: Proof That You're More to God Than Your Mistakes* by Guy Hammond and published by Illumination Publishers. The book is a companion to the documentary movie *FINDING GUY* by One Compass Media.

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