

Judges Ch 16

It appears as if between ch's 15 and 16 there's a 20-year span of silence whereby Samson has been judging Israel. In other words he was more or less their leader, the one who kept the Philistines in check regarding their total dominance of Israel. And as to where before they'd have rather seen him dead than change themselves, now, (although they're not really repenting of their compromise as a nation) at least they're willing to follow Samson's lead having seen the way God worked tremendous victory in His life against the enemy. You recall that Gideon and his men fought a war whereby the odds were 450 to 1 against the Midianites and God delivered them into Gideon's hands. But Samson single-handedly killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey. The men of Judah were handing Samson into the hands of the Philistines having bound him securely with new ropes and when they had set him before them the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he snapped those ropes like a piece of yarn that's being burned, he picked up a fresh jawbone from a freshly dead donkey and went ballistic and before they could scatter, he'd killed a 1,000 of them. And he shouted the victory cry of pride (Vs 16 read) and then he tossed that jawbone aside and as the adrenaline kind of subsided he realized that he was about to die of thirst. What was happening? God was reminding him of his frailty, the fact that he was but dust and the victory was the Lord's. And in vs 18 his focus was realigned as his thirst took him to his knees in humility and as he cried out to the Lord, acknowledging the Lord's victory in the battle, God split open a hollow place and caused living water to flow forth reviving Samson's Spirit. How we so often need to be refreshed in our spirits when the battle is over for the moment or the day or the week or year. However long we've been up against the enemy and when the Lord grants us victory we often find ourselves weak and in need of fresh, living water that we might be revived. Well Samson was revived and we read in vs 20 of ch 15 (read), and now we begin to see him yet again stumble as a calf to the slaughter because he couldn't crucify the flesh.

Vs1

Now the scriptures are very honest and they reveal the weaknesses of those whom God uses. God uses sinners; now there's nothing that justifies what Samson has done here and again the ramifications will ultimately destroy him. But you recall that Moses murdered a man, Noah got drunk, David committed adultery and murder and yet God still used all these men, now again every one of them suffered ramifications from their faults. And we *can* shelve ourselves if we're not careful, God will not be mocked, whatever a man sows that will he also reap. But we see that God will use imperfect people, why? Because that's all that He has to choose from, so I'm not going to seek to defend Samson's actions, he's in sin at this point, Gaza is a territory occupied by the Philistines, and so in reality he never should have gone there in the 1st place. But having gone there he wound up getting himself in a position of compromise. How many times we go places we ought not be, whether it be to a buddies house who's having a party and we think, "well, we'll witness and then when it gets out of control, we'll leave." But in reality when we get there we begin to suffer temptations and rather than taking off and fleeing, we think, "well, one drink won't hurt anything, after all to drink a beer isn't sin."

And before you know it, it's your 5th or 6th one, you're half tanked and you've blown your witness, your integrity and your platform of influence in your friends life. And now they think that you're still the same old you and your "religion" is a joke.

But had you never gone there in the 1st place, none of those things would've happened and God would still be using you in your friend's life, but now God has to restore you (which He will if you repent) and meanwhile, you've forfeited the opportunity to be used by God to speak to your friends because you've compromised. Samson is in compromise, but in Gaza prostitution was legal, which brings up another point, it doesn't matter what is and isn't legal according to this world's system, what matters is what does God's word say. Maybe he was justifying his actions by saying, "hey, I haven't broken any laws" and we do those things to, but God's word has been violated, in Amsterdam it's legal to grow and smoke pot, but while we were there I didn't say hey guys there's nothing wrong with it so lets all stand in a circle and pass a big joint. Now we can't do this in America because it's illegal there, but while we're here, hey, we're not violating the law so lets indulge. It doesn't matter what covenant I'm on, if it violates the word of God then we're to have no part of it. Just because you're search engine will take you there, and you're of legal age to be searching that site, doesn't make it ok, Samson went somewhere where it was ok to do what he did, but that didn't make it ok before the Lord, so be careful not to justify yourself with the legal system of the land.

Vs2

Notice they had to be told that Samson was there, what's my point? Often times we have this tendency to think of Samson as this muscle bound man who's very presence intimidated the socks off of you. After all, he ripped a lion apart, killed 30 men, and then 1,000 men and all these things. But I really don't think that would be an accurate description of Samson, because if it were there would be room for boasting in the flesh. But the bible says that God chooses the weak things of the world to put to shame the things, which are mighty. If Samson was 6'6 and looked like Conan the Barbarian then I believe that people would've known when Samson came to town, but he seemed to be able to walk around in obscurity, not really standing out. It's like when Judas had to point the Lord out with a kiss, if He were the tall one, or the one that was glowing, he could've just said, hey get the one that's glowing who stands a head taller than everyone else. But he couldn't do that; he had to be there to point Him out because if you didn't know Him you probably wouldn't have picked Him out of the crowd as the One who was the Lord. Well, same type thing here, they told the men of Gaza that Samson was in town, and so they closed the gates of the city, surrounded the place and thought, in the morning when he comes out we'll ambush him. And apparently they didn't set a watch at the gates and the men who were waiting around the house at night fell asleep because Samson didn't wait until morning, he just laid low until about mid-night and snuck out of the house.

Vs2-3

Now depending on how you translate this vs he either carried the gates nearly 40 miles to Hebron, or he carried them about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to a hill outside the city that faced Hebron.

But either way you want to look at it, I'm impressed. They thought that by securing the gates they had him, he thought well, that's no problem I'll just up root the gates (posts and all) hoist them up on my back and carry them down the road. And the next day they had to send a regiment out to get the gates, so really Samson does this and it more or less mocks them, makes them look stupid and it is pretty funny, but Samson was a man who never seemed to learn his lesson. It's like the Lord was saying hey, you're getting closed to disaster, it started in Timnah, now you almost got it in Gaza, but notice vs 4 (read).

Now we're all familiar with Samson and Delilah, but once again the name of the place where he met her gives us a clue as to fact that he was somewhere he shouldn't have been, "Sorek" means "Choice vine", in other words he was around the vineyards, something strictly forbidden in the life of a Nazirite. Now we're never given any inclination, or reason to believe that Samson ever married Delilah, so again he's entering into an illicit relationship that he should have never done.

Vs5

With out expounding on them, this vs gives you insight into 3 things that the enemy desires to do concerning the people of God, #1 he wants to overpower you, #2 he wants to bind you and 3^{rdly} he wants to afflict you, and what's the method he'll use to entice you into his hands, attractive temptation. One man said, "I can resist anything, accept temptation" and that seems to be a fairly accurate synopsis of Samson's life as well. Notice the enemy didn't seek to use some homely

Individual that had no appeal to Samson to seek to entice him, there's no temptation in that. Now before I go much farther we need to realize here that moral compromise makes us vulnerable, had Samson not entered into this sinful relationship with Delilah he would have never been open to the enemy's temptation. And in his case, his moral compromise was an obvious one, but many times with us it can be much more subtle, and a lot of times it has to do with the kind of materials we're feeding into our minds. What are we watching or reading, what values do we tolerate and accept, that's why the bible tells us to gird up the loins of our minds and live soberly. Be alert concerning the enemy's devises. Personal purity is a huge issue for believers, because when we compromise, even in our thought lives, we are making ourselves vulnerable to the attack of the enemy, the bible tells us to bring every thought into the captivity of Christ and to be holy, for the Lord your God is holy. So realize that temptation comes in attractive packages, as one commentator put it (Inrig) "The Philistines didn't hire Tugboat Annie; they hire a beauty queen." So 1st of all moral compromise makes us vulnerable, 2^{ndly} temptation comes in attractive packages, and 3^{rdly} temptation comes when we choose the wrong company, taking us back to the principal of being some place we should never be. Even as believers, use wisdom, if you're a female, don't be hanging out at a brothers house, if you're a male don't be going around the gals houses, it's just not safe. I'm not saying that a visit is sin; I'm saying it's not safe and we need to be careful to maintain blamelessness.

And when we place ourselves in places we ought not be, then it should be no big shock when something sinful comes of it. But Samson was flat out with a non-believer and it was the women that he chose to surround himself with that destroyed this man's character. The proverbs speak of the man without understanding visiting a girl's house and he stumbled in like a calf to the slaughter or a fool to the correction stocks. *"Till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, He did not know it would cost his life."* Such is the story of Samson; he hastened right into the snare that would cost him his life. And we talked a little bit about this last week, there are some relationships that just aren't healthy for us spiritually, that need to be severed lest they drag us down, so if there are any "Delilahs" in your life, have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying and deal with it before it's too late. One last thing before we move on, notice that Israel's Judge is being betrayed into the hands of the enemy for the purchase price of silver, she loved silver more than Samson. Interesting a thousand years later, Israel's ultimate Judge will be betrayed into the hands of the enemy for the purchase price of silver, Judas loving silver more than his Savior.

Vs6 (Real discreet huh?)

Vs7-11

It's like the lights are on, but no body's home, I mean surely he's catching onto a pattern by now, every time he throws her a bone she gobbles it up, but he's toying with her, in reality the 1st time that she asked him that question he should have said it's none of your business, I'll never tell, and went home. Then he would have closed the door on evil and that's what we're to do as believers, instead we often flirt with disaster. You give your heart to Christ Sunday morning and Friday night you're buddy calls you up and says, "hey, I know where a great party is." and So you say, "you know what, thanks for asking but I'm not feeling that great I think I'm just going to stay home." And you worm your way out of it and you think "alright, victory is mine" but in reality you simply lied to the guy leaving the open invitation for temptation at any given time. Had you said, "hey, thanks for the call but I've given my heart to Christ and I'm going to be living full on for Him from now on, how would you like to skip the party and go to church with me Sunday morning?" Then he'd never call again, you would've effectively closed the door on evil, Samson left it open and it's going to cost him, his lies are leading him to compromise, and that's what lies do, lies lead to compromise.

Vs12-13

You see he's breaking down, he can't keep up the fight, he's toying with temptation and it's going to trap him.

Vs14

So she weaves his hair and just for good measure pins it to the floor and when he comes up and yanks to whole thing, plank and all right out the door with him, I'm sure it was a nightmare to untangle, but again at 1st sign of temptation he should have just fled the scene.

Nowhere in the bible are we asked to fight temptation, we're told to flee it, 1 Cor 6:18 "*Flee sexual immorality.*" 1 Cor 10:14-15 "*Flee from idolatry.*" 1 Tim 6:11-12 "*But you, O man of God, flee these things (in regards to greed, materialism and things of that nature) and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.*" And 2 Tim 2:22 "*Flee also youthful lusts.*" Now don't get me wrong, I'm not stupid, I know how hard fleeing can be, especially due to the fact that those things we need to flee from are so appealing to the flesh, and I doubt that it was easy for Joseph to flee naked from Potiphar's house when his wife was trying to entice him to lie with her. But he did because he saw his opportunity for escape and he took it, and look how in the end God used his life. Samson on the other hand didn't resist temptation and look how in the end his life was destroyed.

Vs15-18

It's pay day for Delilah 5500 pieces of silver, I imagine Samson was welling up a little in his eyes when he told her what was in his heart and that's how she could tell that he was spilling the truth, because he realized that in moment he chose her, over his God. In vs 17 he tells her the secret of his strength, "I have been a Nazirite to God from my mothers womb." I've been set apart to the Lord, the secret of his strength lie not in his hair but in his consecration to God, being set apart to the Lord. And he's broken 2/3's of his vow so far, he partied with the Philistines in Timnah walked through the vineyards, has defiled himself through touching dead thing, but the one aspect of his vow that he's never broken is the cutting of his hair. But if his hair were to be cut, symbolizing the breaking of his consecration, then he would be weak like any other man. And the same is true for you and me, there is strength in consecration, but when you break that consecration, we become weak just like anyone else, it's God's Spirit that strengthens us. And when we quench the work of the Spirit in our lives, then we're no different than anyone else, weak and open prey to the snares of the enemy.

When our consecration is broken, we lose our strength

Vs19

He was lulled to sleep on the tempters knees rather than praying on his own, Jesus approached his disciples on the night of his betrayal and said, why are you sleeping, watch and pray lest you enter into temptation.

Vs20

One of the most tragic vs in all the bible, "*he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.*" His lies led to compromise, and his compromise to callousness. He had become so hardened from sin and so overly self-confident from his past victories in spite of his compromise that he couldn't even discern when the Lord had left him. How often people misinterpret the Lord's long suffering, they think that because they're getting away with something or that because the Lord hasn't busted them and still seems to be using their lives that there will be no ramifications to face. But don't be deceived God will not be mocked whatever a man sows that will he also reap.

And if you persist unrepentantly in your sin, then God will eventually cease acknowledging in His work, you may still be doing that which He was doing in you for a season not even knowing that the Lord has left you. You're still sharing or teaching, going about your music ministry or whatever, but the anointing is gone, there's no real impact anymore, God's no longer using you in that capacity and you don't even recognize because your heart is so calloused. He pushed it just a little too far and God quit striving with him, we need to be careful not to take the Spirit of God for granted, maybe he thought well, I've touched dead things and nothing happened, I've had grapes and nothings happened, when I cut my hair nothing will probably happen then either. Because you know he knew it was coming, everything else that he had said so far did, and he wasn't stupid, just deceived. So if you're toying with temptation and succumbing to sin be warned, just because nothing has happened yet it doesn't signal God's approval, or the fact that He'll look the other way for you. He's giving you opportunity to repent, and if you don't believe me when I say the harvest will come.

Vs21

One of the most picturesque vs in the bible regarding the results of sin, 1st it blinds you, then it binds you, it places you in its clutches so that there's no escape, and then ultimately it grinds you. You're life is a perpetually grind of servitude to the bondage and taskmaster of sin and you feel like there's no point in going on, the sin in your life is just grinding you and grinding you and there's nothing you can do about it. They subjected the hero of Israel to the work of a beast of burden or of a slave or women's work, grinding in the mill; that became Samson's life. But God in His love and His interest in our eternal well-being allows us at times to suffer temporarily in order to get us focused back on the things of eternity. Samson had a problem with seeing things and going after them, and so God allowed his eyes to be removed, as Jesus said, better to enter into life having had one of your members perish than having your eyes and going to hell. Now obviously He wasn't encouraging self-mutilation but rather being accountable and removing yourself from those places of temptation. But that's literally what we see here in Samson's life and as the days and weeks and months went by, Samson had a lot of time to think, probably wishing that he'd never gone to Sorek, wishing that he'd never have laid eyes on Delilah and ultimately turning to God and saying God I know I've messed up. I know my life can never be for you what it once was, but if you'll only take me back, you can have what's left.

Vs22

What does this mean, it means Samson had repented, and God is into the business of restoring and renewing lives and so it doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done, if you're willing to repent, God is willing to restore. It's true that Samson's life at this point can never be what it once could've been for the Lord, but Jesus said the one who comes to Me I will in no wise cast him out, He will take your life and use it for His glory.

Vs23-24

Notice his compromise gave the enemy reason to rejoice, why because the God of Israel was mocked through the enemy dominating their leader, our sin and compromise does the same thing. It mocks to power of God before His enemies, and gives glory to their false gods.

Vs25-26

What's happening here? This man whom at one time was so feared and mighty, untouchable and invulnerable is facing the ultimate humiliation, at one time he could take out 1,000 men, now they're all laughing at him, feeling completely safe leaving him in the hands of a little boy.

Vs27

So there's a lot of people around, this is a presidential ball, the 5 lords of the Philistines, no doubt all their counselors, and members of their boards, all the who's who were there plus about 3,000 people on the roof of this place alone, so this was a huge party that their having celebrating the downfall of Samson.

Vs28

This is not the cry of a proud man, this is a man who has been humbled who is calling upon the Lord. This is the only record that we have that Samson ever prayed before he acts, how different things could have been if this would have been his routine, or his pattern previously.

Vs29-30

Many people ask, didn't Samson just kill himself, well, that depends on your perspective. Many people see vs 30 as a martyr's cry, one who's willing even to die himself to regain the glory of God and since God honored his prayer I would have to say that that's probably the more accurate understanding of his end. But the bible doesn't address suicide specifically, I can tell you that it's not the unpardonable sin, but it is self-murder and it is sin and one who commits suicide has given in to the lies of Satan who came to rob, kill, and destroy. And in doing so you rob God of any ability to use your life to His glory and you cut off any plan He may've had for your life. But Samson's death wasn't suicide really; it was martyrdom.

Vs31