

BAND OF BROTHERS
WHEN
JUDGES RULED
AND
SIN REIGNED
LIFE LESSONS FROM
THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Judges 16

How the Mighty Have Fallen: How Complacency Will Always Lead to Destruction

“Only those who know their weakness are able to know God-given strength”

– Timothy Keller, *Judges for You*

- **Can this get worse?**

“Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and went into her” (Judges 16:1 ESV)

- What is God doing here?
 - o Samson does not know what to do with this gift. His source of strength.
 - o He doesn't want to fulfill his vow, he is viciously opposing it.
 - o God is working. He is Israel's source of hope, not Samson
- Samson has judged Israel 20 years
 - o Not exactly 20 years of peace... just 20 years of Samson (Judges 15:20 ESV)
- Wandering around in Gaza, which is the capital of the Philistine nation
 - o No longer just breaking his vow, he is turning to foolishness
- How could you do this?
 - o Look at ourselves. We act the same way.
 - o Take a look at what God has done in our lives, the questions should be what is wrong with US.
 - o Samson did what all of us would do when deceived by sin
- **Deceitfulness of Sin**
 - o Samson is continually “flirting” with sin until it takes over his whole being
 - o Jesus MUST be Lord over our entire life, or we are headed toward destruction, just like Samson.
 - o God's purpose is going to come to fruition regardless of what Samson does.

- **God's strength through Samson's weakness**

"But Samson lay till midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts and pulled them up, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that is in Hebron" (Judges 6:3 ESV)

- This is a 40 mile hike
- Despite his supernatural sin, God is giving him supernatural strength
- Why? Because he is useful to God's purpose.
 - God can, and does use compromising people to fulfill His purposes for his people. He is never out of control throughout this entire story.

- **The Danger of Success:**

- We saw in the life of Gideon what worldly success led him to.
- Adversity is tough, but sometimes success is even harder on our spiritual lives
- God has allowed Samson to become "successful"
 - Leader of the Israelites
 - Man of strength
 - Won battles by himself
- Samson's fault is his failure to recognize these blessings as a gift, and the purpose of his blessings in the first place.
- Do you understand your purpose?

We now can begin to see how sin and grace function on two completely opposed bases. In grace, God takes even our weaknesses and failures and uses them for us, but in sin, we take even his gifts and strengths and use them against him. Our sinful hearts will find ways to use even God's blessing to ruin our lives. Paul speaks of this in Romans 1 when in effect he says that the worst thing God can do to us is to give us our desires-success! The most successful people in the world tend to be the people that are the farthest from God. (Tim Keller, *Judges for you*)

Just as Samson falsely inferred from God's blessing: I can't be defeated, so I can live as I like, so successful people falsely infer from God's blessing: I got this because I was smart and savvy I am self-sufficient!" Tim Keller, *Judges for You*

• **What Lust Leads To**

"After this he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah...." (Judges 16:4-6)

- Falls in love again.
- Samson doesn't have bad luck with women, this is Samson's lust and sin that leads to his circumstances
- Samson is letting his heart be led by flesh desires rather than the Lord

- Samson follows this lustful path to whatever he wants, what he wants in the moment becomes his god.
- Samson loved Delilah's beauty, she loved the money, and what Samson could make her (A national Heroine)
- Samson's Idolatrous attachment to himself.

"An Idolatrous attachment can lead you to break any promise, rationalize any indiscretion, or betray any other allegiance, in order to hold onto it. It may drive you to violate all good and proper boundaries. To practice idolatry is to be a slave. (Tim Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*)

- **Samson's Pride**

"Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him..." (Judges 16:5 ESV)

- The Philistines did not recognize Samson's strength was a gift from God, they think Samson IS a god.
- Samson didn't act like his strength was a gift either, more like a right.
- Philistine's view of Samson was through their lens of their god, Dagon. Their view is warped by a performance based deity.

*"If they bind me with seven fresh **bowstrings**" (Judges 16:7 ESV)*

- The source of Samson's strength is not obvious
- If he was being truthful, he would tell them his true weakness... it was **the worship of himself**.
 - Samson is bound by **lust for whatever he pleases**
- How was he so blinded? This is all men.
 - Samson may be dumb here, but the majority of men act exactly in accord with Samson here. Completely blinded by what we want most, we miss the sin standing right next to us
 - He is blinded because God is not at the forefront of his life, and decision making.

*If they bind me with **New Ropes** that have not been used, then I shall become weak and be like any other man" (Judges 16:11) "If you weave the **Seven locks of my head** with the web and fasten it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man" (Judges 16:13)*

- It would seem as though he has lost all sense
- No good reason for him to not end this relationship immediately
 - Lust over anything can **warp everything**
- Samson is allowing this bondage to exist in his life because he is refusing to call sin what it truly is.
 - This is a massive blind spot. Massive amount of **complacency**.

“His soul was vexed to death. And he told her all his heart, and said to her, “A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazarite to God from my mother womb....”
(Judges 16:16-17)

- **Vexed to death:** Translated as “to be impatient”. Basically she was driving him crazy.
 - o Samson cannot imagine not getting what he wants (sex).
- Samson was using her (sexual pleasure, beauty), and Delilah was using him (power, wealth).
- The terrible sacrifice of our relationship with God for someone/something.
- Cutting of his hair: Ultimate “screw you” to God.

- **Samson’s Fall**

“His strength left him. And she said “the philistines are upon you Samson!” He awoke from his sleep and said “I will go out as other times and shake myself free” But he did not know the Lord had left him.... The Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza” (Judges 16:20-21 ESV)

- Samson is finally having to reckon with his abandonment of God
- His hair was never his true source of strength, **he was weak because “The Lord had left him”**
- His life is a continual working against his relationship with God
- “He did not know that the Lord had left him”
 - o Samson did not know his hair had been cut. But more importantly did not know that his source of strength was the Lord.

Samson thought he could “get away” with sin and escape its consequences. He misinterpreted the merciful delay of God’s judgment or correction as a sign that He really didn’t care. He therefore presumed on God’s mercy and continued on in his sin, making things far worse (Morgan) – David Guzik, *Judges 16*

- Samson’s vs. Philistine view of his strength
 - o Samson **thought he didn’t have to do anything** to keep his strength. That God would bless him regardless of his actions.
 - o Philistines **thought “he must be doing something”** to be that strong. That God was blessing him because of a certain action.
- The Philistine’s god (Dagon) was half man, half fish. They believed that Samson was half God, half man. They saw him as a god.
- In their eyes, since Samson was defeated, Dagon must be greater than Israel’s God.
 - o What they failed to see – **Samson’s gifts came from a much greater, more powerful God.**

- **Dagon v. God**

- Philistines believed they had to “do something” to be right with god, which is why Samson was so odd to them.
- What the Philistines do not recognize is that the God of Israel does not play by their rules. His purposes will come to pass, period.
- How often are we like them? Do we believe we are blessed if we **do something** , or complacent because **“God will bless me”**

“Christian duties need to flow out of a relationship with God rather than an attempt to get favor and blessing from Him” (David Guzik, Judges 16)

“And he ground at the mill in the prison. But the hair of his head began to grow back again after it had been shaved.....and when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said “Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us. When their hearts were merry they said “Call Samson, that he may entertain us”. (Judges 16:21-25 ESV)

- Philistines believe since they have defeated Israel’s “man god”, therefore their god is greater
- **Dagon was the god of Agriculture (prosperity)** for the Philistines. They could not understand grace/mercy that came from a God who loved His people despite their failures.
 - Our God intervened because of His love for Israel. He would not let them be destroyed regardless of their failures.
- “His Hair grew back”
 - Though his hair is growing back, what mattered was **God was intervening on behalf of his people.**
 - God renews Samson’s vow without Samson’s repentance or approval.
 - Though we know Samson’s hair is not the source of his strength, the Philistine’s didn’t!
- **“The Successful Samson”**
 - The person who is most successful in the world, has a very hard time crying out to God.
 - The reality → Samson was at his peak of his life, getting everything he wanted then it was all taken away
 - He still does not cry out to God.
 - His hope was in something aside from God, in many different idols. But they never satisfy.

- **God's Victory**

"And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them".... Then Samson called to the Lord and said "O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes". (Judges 6:26-28 ESV)

"Let me die with the Philistines, Samson bowed with all of his strength, 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 killed during his life". (Judges 6:30 ESV)

- Samson is without his hair, his strength, his eyes, and the spirit of the Lord. He is seen as useless. **BUT God gives him victory.**
 - o This is God coming into the picture from the background and revealing His power.
- Led by a little boy, Samson is mocked and brought to his lowest point of his life.
- His first prayer is his last.
- **BUT, this was never about Samson.** It was, and always will be about God defeating His enemies through a weak man. God was in control throughout the whole story.
- **It teaches us a lesson about Complacency**
 - o Samson's end is a picture of a believer living in complacency
 - o Samson is not to be followed, his end is tragic.
 - o He never truly understood what his purpose was, and it showed in how he used his gifts.
 - o Do you know your purpose? Do you know what your gifts are for?
 - o Samson's life should have ended differently, **all he had to do was be obedient.**
 - o His life is marked by a wasted potential. How great is your potential? To fulfill the purposes of God, to fulfill our potential, **we must allow him to deal deeply with us.** We must **fight complacency.**
- **Strength in Weakness**

"The Samson narrative begins with a strong man who is revealed to be weak, but it ends with a weak man who is stronger than he ever was before" David Jackman, *Judges, Ruth*

- o This is the Gospel. Jesus became weak to become strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- o Samson's story ends in his death, but Jesus' doesn't.
- o God changes the narrative of the whole story, because it is HIS story, not ours.
- o Our story as a Christian needs to be the same pattern, become weak, so we can see God can make us into what he wants us to be.
- o God is greater than Samson, and He is greater than you.
- o May we kill complacency so that we may kill the sin that wants to hide within our hearts.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you know your purpose in life? What is it?
2. Where in your life can you point to complacency? How can you fight the urge to coast?
3. If you pay attention, you see that God is in control at all times throughout this chapter. Where in your life does it seem as though God is not in control? How can you trust Him in that season?