

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to Judges 16

We are continuing our verse by verse study through the Book of Judges

And we are going to conclude our study in the life of Samson.

A life that can be summed up by the phrase, wasted potential.

**Let's pray...**

**[Jdg 16:1-31 NKJV] 1 Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.**

The last time we were here on Wednesday night, when we looked at chapters 14,15 – you might remember that we were introduced to Samson wandering in the city of Timnah.

And I mentioned that Timnah was a border city – it was on the outskirts of the land that the Philistines possessed.

This is the place where he saw the philly and he wanted to marry her –

But then it turned out that the philly turned out to be, in the words of Samson – a heifer, because she was more loyal to her people than to Samson – and Samson leaves and she returns and then Samson and the Philistines hate each other from that point on – Samson is in Gaza now – this is the same Gaza we hear about in the news today.

It is a strip of land right along the Mediterranean coast.

Samson is no longer hanging out in a border town – he has immersed himself with the enemy.

Kind of like Lot – after choosing the plains of the Jordan, he pitched his tent close to the Sodom and one chapter later, he is living in Sodom and by the time God destroyed Sodom, he was acting as a judge in Sodom.

Both Samson and Lot had the same problem; they were looking to see how far they could get.

What was Samson doing in Gaza –

Looking for another philly -

**2 [When] the Gazites [were told], "Samson has come here!" they surrounded [the place] and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, "In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him."**

So the Philistines – when they get word that Samson is there, they decide that they are going to wait until the morning and ambush him when he leaves the house.

They closed the city gate – remember, all the cities were surrounded by walls – so Samson was trapped.

**3 And Samson lay [low] till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put [them] on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.**

Samson caught wind of the ambush & got up in the middle of the night when everyone was asleep.

He goes to the city gates – they are locked.

And he uses the strength that the Lord has given to him.

So he pulls the gates completely out and carries them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

Two things to consider –

1. The city gates were made of iron. Remember, the Philistines were known for their modern technology (they were the ones that had the indestructible iron chariots) – the weight of the city gates has been estimated at over 6000 lbs.

2. Samson didn't merely remove the gates and set them nicely against the wall. He carried them miles away. Some people say that he carried them 40 miles away. It was a way for Samson to rub it in – "you will never catch me"

I want us to consider this – Samson with all this strength that the Lord gave him – he never led an army, he never rallied his people to fight against the Philistines.

Every single conflict he had with the Philistines is because they stood in the way of something he wanted for himself or he was angry at them for something they had done to him

And while Samson's actions were selfish, we see that God still brings deliverance for Israel through Samson.

**4 Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name [was] Delilah.**

So here we come to Delilah – this is woman #3

1. His fiancé
2. The harlot at the beginning of the chapter
3. And now, Delilah.

Where was she from? The Valley of Sorek.

The meaning of the Valley of Sorek means – Valley of the choice vine.

Wasn't he supposed to abstain from anything that came from the vine???

**5 And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and find out where his great strength [lies], and by what [means] we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred [pieces] of silver."**

When the Philistines discovered that Samson was in love with Delilah – they pounced on the opportunity to get rid of him.

And so they go Delilah, and they appeal to her patriotism (we need you to help your people – even though we are not told that she was a Philistine, it is doubtful they would have approached a Jewish girl about getting rid of the Jewish hero.) and they also appeal to her greed – if you help us, we are going to give you a lot of money.

You see, one of the things we are going to find out about Delilah is that she loved money more than she loved Samson – kind of makey you want to say, “run Sammy”

And how was she going to help them? By enticing or seducing Samson to reveal where he gets his strength from.

They were baffled for Samson did what was obviously impossible.

This is why I say over and over again that Samson was not buff.

If Samson had been some massive, muscle-bound giant, they would have known where his strength came from.

His muscles – right.

BTW – those body building dudes, one of the prerequisites that all those guys share is that they have to be in the gym all the time – a great amount of discipline and commitment is required.

These are two qualities that we don't find in the life of Samson.

**6 So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength [lies], and with what you may be bound to afflict you."**

Delilah isn't very subtle.

She gets straight to the point.

How can I tie you so you won't get away?

"Sammy, tell me how you can be destroyed?"

What is your kryptonite?

You would think Samson would have ended it right there right?

**7 And Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any [other] man." 8 So the lords of**

the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. 9 Now [men were] lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, "The Philistines [are] upon you, Samson!" But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

Why did Samson lie?

Did Samson know Delilah's heart?

Did he learn his lesson from his fiancé?

Is he just messing with her head? Maybe Samson thinks he can out wit her.

If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings

Do you know what they made bowstring from in 500 BC?

Animal intestines –

What was one of the things that Samson was not supposed to come in contact with – anything unclean / dead.

So could it be that Samson is actually testing God here?

So after telling Delilah – she ties him up

She calls for the Philistines who were waiting

Samson breaks from the intestines he was tied with and goes after the Philistines.

**10 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with." 11 So he said to her, "If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any [other] man." 12 Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, "The Philistines [are] upon you, Samson!" And [men were] lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.**

Here we see how sin warps our sensibilities –

Samson is still there – as long as he keeps getting what he's after, he doesn't care.

This is one of the lessons in our text today

Once we start teasing with sin, it gets real hard to stop

We must not tease with sin, flirt with it or play with it.

Rather, we must shun it and stay clear.

**13 Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with." And he said to her, "If you weave **the seven locks of my head** into the web of the loom"—14 So she wove [it] tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, "The Philistines [are] upon you, Samson!"**

**But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom.**

Samson is saying here that if she were to weave his hair into a piece of cloth, he would be powerless.

Think about what Samson is doing here -

He's starting to get a little closer to the truth.

He's talking about his hair.

And then he allows Delilah to weave his hair in the loom – and she took so long that he actually took a nap.

He fell asleep – we know he fell asleep because the scriptures tell us that he woke up when the Philistines came in.

The first two times, we are not told he fell asleep –

This is what happens when we start to walk away from the Lord.

We lose our sense of spiritual clarity.

We begin to fall asleep spiritually

God doesn't seem quite as close as before.

So, we don't hear from the Lord as much as we used to.

That is why in Rev 3:2 – Jesus, as He is rebuking the Church of Sardis – “the dead church” . He says Sardis, snap out of it! wake up, be watchful!!!

You see, Samson KNOWS Delilah is trying to turn him over to the Philistines!!

He KNOWS it

So why does he submit to her? – because sin has blinded him.

He still thinks he can get away before he gets in trouble

That is the danger we encounter when we play with sin – our pride takes over.

We begin that we can play with fire and not get burned.

**15 Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart [is] not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength [lies]." 16 And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, [so] that his soul was vexed to death, 17 that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I [have been] a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any [other] man."**

Samson couldn't take it anymore

Delilah wore him out

All Samson had to do was to pick up and leave and her pestering would not have bothered him anymore

All he had to do was go, leave, depart from the place of sin

He could have left right after he told her – but he decided to stay.

So he told her all his heart – she told her that if his hair was cut – he would be like everyone else.

Part of the Nazirite vow was that

“All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD, he shall be holy” (Numbers 6:5).

When the period of time you volunteered to be a Nazirite ended, you shaved your head as a sign you were done (Numbers 6:18).

By allowing his head to be shaved, Samson was announcing that he was done being God's Nazirite.

In his case, since he was called by God to be a Nazirite for life, in order to judge Israel, shaving his head off was like turning in his resignation.

Think of it like this:

God wanted His judge to be a life long Nazirite.

If Samson wasn't going to be a Nazirite, then he wouldn't be judge - and that meant he'd no longer needed the supernatural empowering of the Spirit.

I had you make a note earlier about how many locks of hair Samson had – what was the number? 7

**[Isa 11:2 NKJV] 2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.**

These seven aspects of the Spirit of God are not the only characteristics of the Holy Spirit. But they are grouped together in a “seven” to show the fullness and perfection of the Holy Spirit.

Samson’s seven locks of never-cut hair represented the Holy Spirit upon him, strengthening him.

Cut his hair with his permission and it represented him relinquishing the Spirit – the source of his power..

**18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart." So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. 19 Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man**

**and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him.**

Can you imagine being the man that was called in to shave Samson – knowing what he had already done.

That is one brave guy.

**20 And she said, "The Philistines [are] upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.**

In my opinion – I think this is the most tragic verse in scriptures.

Samson was so spiritually numb by this time, he had no idea the Spirit of the Lord had left him

God honored Samson's choice –

"No more will I strive with you. You want your sin - you can have it."

**21 Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters (ankle shackles), and he became a grinder in the prison.**

The word used regarding Samson's eyes means "bored out."

This is the effect of sin in our lives.

It binds us, it holds us captive and then we find ourselves grinding through life.

By the way, in the movies – they usually show Samson tied to a big giant wheel – like they would an ox. Very inaccurate. He didn't have strength.

He was doing woman's work, using a simple grinding stone and bowl, all day, everyday.

It was humiliating, not a show of strength.

**22 However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.**

When we first read verse 22 – we might say, well of course it's going to grow back. It's hair – that is what hair does. It grows back.

But I think the point is that Samson didn't have it cut anymore. He let it grow. It would seem that he renewed his Nazarite vow.

There would continue to be horrendous consequences to Samson's sin.

He was still a slave to the Philistines.

He was still blind.

But God began to work again in his life.

**This is grace.**

**23 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said: "Our god has delivered into our hands Samson our enemy!" 24 When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said: "Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy, The destroyer of our land, And the one who multiplied our dead."**

Dagon was the pagan god that the Philistines worshipped.

He was a half man / half fish god.

And they are gathering together to have a religious celebration – because they believe that Dagon was the one who defeated and delivered Samson

It wasn't Dagon who'd defeated & delivered Samson; it was his own failure & rebellion against God.

This is one of the greatest tragedies of sin for the believer – it gives the enemies of God a reason to rejoice.

**25 So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may perform for us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars.**

Samson wasn't fighting lions or lifting boulders for the people.

He wasn't going to juggle for them

They brought him out so the people can laugh and mock him –

**26 Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them." 27 Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines [were] there--about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed. 28 Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, "O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! **Strengthen me**, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one [blow] take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!"**

I want you to look at closely at Samson's prayer in verse 28

Notice that he doesn't show repentance for what he did

He is not sorry that for the way he has dishonored God – by giving the Philistines cause to mock God.

He is mad that they plucked his eyes out

He wants vengeance

So he still has an "I" problem – besides being blind.

But notice that he acknowledges that his strength came from the Lord –

"Strengthen me"

So even though his motive isn't pure, he knows the source of his strength is the Lord.

And church, it's based on this lone act of faith in God, misplaced as it is, that Samson makes it into the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11!

If Samson makes it, there's hope for us.

**29 And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. 30 Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he pushed with [all his] might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who [were] in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life. 31 And his brothers and all his father's household came down and took him, and brought [him] up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years.**

When did Samson accomplish his greatest act of deliverance?

When he died.

When do we get real victory in life?

When we die – when we die to self.

We looked at Gal 2:20 on Sunday – that is what the entire sermon was about.

Galatians 2:20 says –

**[Gal 2:20 NKJV] 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the [life] which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me..**

Jesus said that to follow Him we must die to self, daily!

Samson lived a life of wasted potential because Samson lived for himself instead of God.

If Samson had died to self when he first went to Timnah all the way back in Ch. 14, he never would have ended up in the rubble of the Temple of Dagon.

If we want to live to our potential, then we die to self.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'



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