

# JUDGES & ROMANS: RUINED TO RIGHTEOUS

## Lesson 17: Ruin of Samson

Key Verse: 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 16.28

There is cautionary wisdom in the idiom that says pointing one finger in judgment of another person reveals three fingers pointed at oneself. The quick desire to judge others can be a symptom of unknown and/or unconfessed sins within ourselves. Through the privilege of **prayer** we can ask for illumination of our sins, confessing them as God searches our hearts. Through the Holy Spirit's groans, shrieks, and cries on our behalf, Jesus reminds His daughter that her weakness unleashes the conquering "power of Christ" (2 Corinthians 12.9). In this security, God buttresses our faith as His Son reminds us of His Father's secured promise as **our Strength**. Even when confronted with three well-deserved fingers pointed at us, we can take refuge in God's forgiveness and mercy. Thanks be to God!

*Lord God on High, Chief Cornerstone, and our Strength, thank You for forgiveness. Thank You for waging war against sin. Thank You for victory over sin, even when we are defeated. Thank You that we can tell You that we have been defeated! Thank You for removing all shame for our sins and doubt that our sin has caused You to leave us. We praise You as the God who secured us in Your Presence. We praise You as the God who placed Himself by His Spirit IN us so that we can cry out, "Oh LORD God, remember me and strengthen me!"*

**Judges 15.1-16.31** After some days, at the time of wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife with a young goat. And he said, "I will go in to my wife in the chamber." But her father would not allow him to go in. **2** And her father said, "I really thought that you utterly hated her, so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please take her instead." **3** And Samson said to them, "This time I shall be innocent in regard to the Philistines, when I do them harm." **4** So Samson went and caught 300 foxes and took torches. And he turned them tail to tail and put a torch between each pair of tails. **5** And when he had set fire to the torches, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines and set fire to the stacked grain and the standing grain, as well as the olive orchards.

**6** Then the Philistines said, "Who has done this?" And they said, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion." And the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire. **7** And Samson said to them, "If this is what you do, I swear I will be avenged on you, and after that I will quit." **8** And he struck them hip and thigh with a great blow, and he went down and stayed in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

**9** Then the Philistines came up and encamped in Judah and made a raid on Lehi. **10** And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" They said, "We have come up to bind Samson, to do to him as he did to us." **11** Then 3,000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that you have done to us?" And he said to them, "As they did to me, so have I done to them." **12** And they said to him, "We have come down to bind you, that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines." And Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not attack me yourselves." **13** They said to him, "No; we will only bind you and give you into their hands. We will surely not kill you." So they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

**14** When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. **15** And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and put out his hand and took it, and with it he struck 1,000 men. **16** And Samson said, "With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey have I struck down a thousand men." **17** As soon as he had finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone out of his hand. And that place was called Ramath-lehi. **18** And he was very thirsty, and he called upon the LORD and said, "You have granted this great salvation by the hand of your servant, and shall I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" **19** And God split open the hollow place that is at Lehi, and water came out from it. And when he drank, his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore the name of it was called En-hakkore; it is at Lehi to this day. **20** And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

**CH 16** Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and he went in to her. **2** The Gazites were told, "Samson has come here." And they surrounded the place and set an ambush for him all night at the gate of the city. They kept quiet all night, saying, "Let us wait till the light of the morning; then we will kill him." **3** 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 front of Hebron.

**4** After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. **5** And the lords of the Philistines came up to

her and said to her, "Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver." **6** So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you." **7** Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." **8** Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. **9** Now she had men lying in ambush in an inner chamber. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he snapped the bowstrings, as a thread of flax snaps when it touches the fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

**10** Then Delilah said to Samson, "Behold, you have mocked me and told me lies. Please tell me how you might be bound." **11** And he said to her, "If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." **12** So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And the men lying in ambush were in an inner chamber. But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread. **13** Then Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound." And he said to her, "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." **14** So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web. And she made them tight with the pin and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web. **15** And 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 you have not told me where your great strength lies." **16** And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death.

**17** And he told her all his heart, and said to her, "A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man." **18** When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up again, for he has told me all his heart." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. **19** She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. **20** And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free."

But he did not know that the LORD had left him. **21** And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. And he ground at the mill in the prison. **22** But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved. **23** Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand." **24** 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." **25** And when their hearts were merry, they said, "Call Samson, that he may entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars. **26** 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." **27** Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained.

**28** 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." **29** And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. **30** And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Then he bowed with all 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 had killed during his life. **31** Then his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had judged Israel twenty years.

**Diamonds:** Samson's life is an allegorical picture of God's people. As such, the temptation to point one finger at him in judgment, to vilify him, or reduce him to stupidity and easy manipulation by sin instantly exposes the three fingers rightly pointed at ourselves.

Rather than become engrossed in Samson's stories, we are focusing on God. While this passage is an entertaining Bible story about a man with God-like strength (and really beautiful hair!), in reality Samson's life lands us face down in shattered humility before God, joining Paul in crying out: "Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments *and* decisions and how unfathomable *and* untraceable are His ways! For who has known the mind of the LORD, or who has been His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it would be paid back to Him? For from Him [all things originate] and through Him [all things live and exist] and to Him are all things [directed]. To Him be glory *and* honor forever! Amen." (Romans 11.33-36, AMP)

Samson's first wedding ended with him starting a geopolitical crisis. Having laid upon his godly parents' couch for a while, Samson returns to his own crime scene (Judges 14.19-15.1). This is a masterful picture of the lure of "besetting sin", or sins whose gravitational pull is seductive, enticing, desirable, enchanting, appealing, and just irresistible. We learned in Judges

15.1-8 that giving in to the seductive appeal of besetting sin sets in motion harmful costs to not only ourselves but also is costly to those around us.

1. It is easy to find several besetting sins from within Samson in Judges 14.19-15.3. Consider your besetting sin(s). What makes it/them irresistible? What are the consequences to not only yourself, but others, when you are seduced by and then engage in your besetting sin(s)?

Remember God's purpose and plan for His fragile clay pot, Samson: to deliver His people from being under Philistine rule. (Judges 14.4; 15.11) Clearly Samson is motivated by revenge, ego, and sinful impulses as he reignites a war with the Philistines in Judges 15.1-17.

2. Based on all you know about God, what do you think motivated God in permitting Samson to reignite war with the Philistines? (Use any deity studied in any lesson this year as well as your notes from any lecture to help develop your answer.)

Buried within the action of Judges 15 is a picture of the neighborhood and good neighbors Judah – God's own tribe – have become to the Philistines, God's enemies (Judges 15.9-13). Judah's dismay with Samson alongside their doomsday predictions of the certain calamity coming (Judges 15.11) reveal the source of their moral compass: themselves, or what is right in their own eyes. Their negotiations with Samson, their fellow Israelite, to deliver him as a prisoner to their own enemy exposes how fractured the Israelite community had become. This helps us understand the pathway God's people have chosen that leads to the coming civil war within the tribe of Israel described in the final chapters of Judges.

3. God had provided refreshing and life-sustaining water for His famished and irritated people at least once before Samson found himself in a similar situation and mindset. Read both Exodus 17.1-7 and Numbers 20.2-13. How does Samson exhibit a similar mindset and attitude before God as God's people in the wilderness? What is God teaching us about His character in these episodes? What is God teaching us about our character in these episodes?

4. Perhaps Samson was whistling a tune while on his way to Gaza (Judges 16.1). Moses gave Israel (and Samson) a song to sing, or whistle, in Deuteronomy 32. Read both God's command in Deuteronomy 31.19-22 and then the song God commanded in 32.1-43.
  - a. How do Samson's actions in Judges 16.1 provide a succinct summary of God's description of the course and waywardness of His own people from the song? In other words, how do Samson's actions personify God's people (as sung about) in Deuteronomy 32.1-43?
  - b. How do Samson's actions in Judges 16.1 point beyond him and to the heart and mind of God's own people in Judges? In other words, how do Samson's actions here paint a life-sized portrait of God's own people at this time in history?

The problem in the story of Samson and Delilah is not Delilah, it's Samson. As we saw with his first wife<sup>1</sup>, Samson treats women according to his "eyes" rather than as God's daughters. While Hollywood depicts Delilah as a temptress and a prostitute, in truth, we know little about her. Her name is Hebrew and Samson met her in her hometown located in Philistine-controlled territory. We don't know her profession. We do know that her involvement with Samson immediately placed her in jeopardy. While it is convenient to suggest she is transactional in her relationship with Samson, in reality, this story isn't about Delilah, it's about God and His people.

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<sup>1</sup>There is not enough evidence to support that Samson met the legal requirements to have ever been declared married. In addition, there isn't enough evidence to support whether he consummated his first potential marriage. Even the transliteration of the term, "wife", does not provide clarity! Just as in Deborah, transliteration and provided details don't provide conclusive conclusions. (Schneider, pp. 63-69, 209-210, 212-214)



Even in times of testing a committed believer can be assured of God's presence and strength, including the need for necessary physical strength (2 Samuel 22.31-37; Psalm 73.26; 84.5). For in our weakness, we can find God's strength to be our sufficiency for each day's challenges (Isaiah 12.2; Psalm 18.1-2; 2 Corinthians 12.9-10).

Thus, David declared: 'God is our strong refuge; He is truly our helper in times of trouble' (Psalm 46.1). God's strength is available not only for difficult times, however, but for all of life's opportunities and challenges (Isaiah 40.31; Habakkuk 3.19; Psalm 27.14; 31.24; 2 Thessalonians 2.16-17)."

**Doctrine: Prayer**<sup>4</sup>~ (Judges 16.28) "We are able to talk to God. He speaks verbally to us in His Word and nonverbally through His obvious providence. We commune with Him through prayer...In and through prayer we express our reverence and adoration for God (Psalm 118:1-4, 24, 29); we bare our souls in contrite confession before Him (Psalm 32.5-6); we pour out the thanksgiving of grateful hearts (Philippians 4.6-7); and we offer our petitions (requests) and supplications (pleadings) to Him (Psalm 5.1-3; Romans 8.26-27)."

"In prayer we experience God as personal and powerful (Revelation 19.1). He can hear and act in response (1 John 5.14-15)...Prayer is a means God uses to bring His sovereign will to pass (Luke 11.2-4)."

"Prayer is to be addressed to God alone, either to God as Triune (three in one) or to the distinct persons of the Godhead (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit; John 16.23-24). To pray to creatures is idolatry (Matthew 6.7)."

9. Samson's "call to the LORD" in Judges 16.28 is a prayer. It's a tragic prayer in that Samson asks to die alongside his and God's enemies (Judges 16.30). God accomplished His will through Samson and Samson's prayer (Judges 14.4). What does the grittiness and simplicity of Samson's prayer teach you about what is, or isn't, required when you pray to God?

"Proper prayer has several requisites:

1. "...we approach God with sincerity (Psalm 117). Empty and insincere phrases are a mockery to Him. Such prayer, far from being an exercise of godly religion, is an offense against God (Matthew 6.5, 7; 21.13)."
2. "...we approach God with reverence. In prayer, we must always remember to whom we are speaking...As people pay homage to a king by entering [his] presence with a posture of respect and obeisance (adoration, worship), so we come before God in full recognition of His supreme Majesty (Matthew 6.9-13)."
3. "...we approach God in humility. Not only must we remember who He is, but we must also remember who and what we are. We are His adopted children. We are also sinful creatures. He invites us to come boldly before Him, but never arrogantly." (Daniel 9.3-5)

"God instructs us to be earnest and fervent in our requests. At the same time, we come in willful submission. To say 'Your will be done' is not an indication of a lack of faith. The faith we bring to prayer must include a trust that God is able to hear our prayers and that He is disposed to answer them. Yet when God says no to our request, this faith also trusts in His wisdom (Matthew 26.36-39, 42; Mark 14.35; Luke 22.41-44). God's wisdom and benevolence (kindness, goodness, open-handedness) must always and everywhere be assumed by those who entreat Him with petition." (Psalm 62.8)

"We pray in the name of Jesus because we do thereby acknowledge His office as Mediator (John 17). As our High Priest, Christ is our intercessory even as the Holy Spirit is our helper in prayer (John 14.16-17, 26)."

**Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:** Several characters in the story of Judges have challenged the notion that when we speak to God, we need to be refined or reach for a technical accuracy in how we are to approach God. Even Paul, having learned from Jesus' examples, boiled down prayer to a cry, *Abba Father!* Rather than spend time here contemplating how your prayer before God would sound to the women around you, how many fingers they may point at you for your authenticity before God (while they have 3 pointed at themselves!), pray with grittiness and simplicity. Or with eloquence and flowered language. Just do it before God, an audience of One.

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<sup>4</sup> Sproul, pp. 261-262

## Lecture Outline:

**Aim:** Believers fulfill their God-given potential when they live set apart for Him.

- I. Samson's Revenge (Judges 15) **T1:** Living set apart for God guards against assimilation with the world.
  - a. In what ways are you simply going with the flow and assimilating into the world?
  - b. How might assimilation into our current culture be hindering you from reaching your fullest God-given potential?
- II. Samson's Ruin (Judges 16) **T2:** Living set apart for God guards against wasting our God-given potential.
  - a. What are you failing to do to live set apart for God and His purpose for your life?
  - b. What have you identified as God's purpose for you? How are you living out that purpose?

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