

“Samson, Part 2: His Life”

Sermon Notes

➤ **The life of Samson teaches us that salvation is ever and only for sinners**

**5 devastating dimensions of sin in our passage...*

1. Sin declares us unlawful (14:1-4)
2. Sin renders us unclean (14:5-9)
3. Sin leaves us unprepared (14:10-20)
4. Sin reveals our unconcern (15:1-17)
5. Sin makes us unrepentant (15:18-20)

Next Sunday: Judges 16:1-31 - “Samson, Part 3: His Death”

Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of March 26th-April 1st

In August of 2020, Brooks Waldron published an article at The Gospel Coalition titled: “The Unexpected Lessons of Samson”.¹ Brooks grew up in the Westonka area and used to attend MEFC when home between semesters from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. This article is an outstanding application of the life of Samson to our own. Read and reflect on it in your own personal devotions, in your family worship time, or alongside your community group.

For kids who grew up in the church, Samson was like a Marvel superhero. With superhuman strength he slew a lion with his bare hands, lifted a city gate off its hinges, and repeatedly took on dozens of Philistines in hand-to-hand combat. He was a hero countless little boys would want to emulate. But the story was also filled with Samson’s pride, disobedience, and sinful relationships with women. I had a difficult time making sense of it. As I wrestled with Samson’s story over the years, I discovered some profound lessons buried beneath the surface—particularly related to the development of four themes.

1. Sight

The book of Judges says of the days of Samson and the other judges: “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (17:6). Later, the book concludes with the sad statement repeated: “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (21:25). What Moses had urged years earlier had been disregarded: “You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes” (Deut. 12:8). It’s in these days when God raises up one of Israel’s last judges, Samson. His birth is miraculous, following the pattern of Abraham and Sarah who, like Samson’s parents, received an angelic messenger before a miraculous conception. The angel foretold Samson’s birth to his mother: “Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son” (Judg. 13:5). Contrast this with the first scene in which adult Samson is introduced, where he’s courting disobedience by attempting to marry a Philistine woman: “You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods” (Deut. 7:3–4). Samson’s words to his parents are telling: “Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes” (14:3). This phrase captures more than Samson’s attraction; it reveals the condition of his heart. Several verses later, the phrase is again repeated: “He went down and talked with the woman, and she was right in Samson’s eyes” (14:7).

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/samson-lessons/> . Accessed 3/25/23 @ 7:30am.

2. Strength

Sandwiched between the author's two statements of this Philistine woman being "right in his eyes" is another significant encounter. As Samson and his parents are on their way to talk with his future bride, Samson meets a young lion on the road. Though he has nothing to defend himself, "the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him" and Samson kills the animal with his bare hands. This framing highlights the great irony: though physically strong, Samson is morally weak. Shortly after this incident the narrator again states, "The Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him," before Samson goes and kills 30 Philistines (14:19). And later we read again, "The Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him," before Samson slaughters 1,000 Philistines with a donkey's jawbone (15:14–15). Despite Samson's disobedience, the Spirit of God would come on him, time after time, enabling him to accomplish incredible feats of strength.

3. Sin

After reading of Samson's brief relationship with his Philistine wife—and with a prostitute—we are told, "After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah" (16:4). Samson's sin will bring his story to an end. Delilah begins pressuring Samson to reveal the secret to his great strength. He lies to her three times. Finally, she says, "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" (16:15). Why does Samson finally give in to Delilah's questioning? Because she's requiring him to prove his love and allegiance to her. Samson's idolatry of women, and now Delilah in particular, has made him weaker than ever before, and spiritually blind. So Samson tells Delilah his secret. After learning the source of Samson's strength, Delilah tells the Philistines and, after she cuts his hair, we're told that "his strength left him." Sure enough, "the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles" (16:19, 21). Samson has given both his strength and his eyes to people, rather than to God. And the man who's already been shown to be spiritually weak, now becomes physically weak. He who was shown to be spiritually blind, now becomes physically blind. He who was shown to be a spiritual slave, now becomes a slave in the flesh.

4. Sovereignty

But the story doesn't end there. While being publicly humiliated in the temple of the Philistine god, Samson "called to the LORD and said, 'Oh Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God'" (16:28). At that prayer Samson's strength is returned to him. He pushes against the pillars, causing the roof of the temple to fall, crushing everyone underneath. Samson dies while conquering God's enemies. The narrator sums up the tragic irony: "So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life." There's a mysterious theme in this narrative of God's sovereignty over Samson's sin. Given the dramatic fashion in which his birth was announced, one

would've thought his life would've been more righteous, and ended less tragically. Yet that wasn't the case. Early on in the story, as Samson is pursuing his Philistine wife, his parents attempt to reason with him: "Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" (14:3). Yet Samson is determined. Indeed, the narrator makes this significant remark: "His father and mother did not know that it was from the LORD, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines." Samson's sinful pursuit was ultimately from God. God worked through Samson's sin in order to accomplish his people's victory.

Shadows of Things to Come

More than a thousand years after the angelic visit to Samson's mother, another angel gave a young virgin a similar prediction: "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus" ([Luke 1:31](#)). While the first angel told Samson's parents that he would "begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines" ([Judg. 13:5](#)), the other told Jesus's parents that "he will save his people from their sins" ([Matt. 1:21](#)). While Samson's mother miraculously conceived through her husband, Jesus's mother conceived as a virgin. While both had angels announce their births, only Jesus had a multitude of angels singing for joy ([Luke 2:13-14](#)). Jesus, like Samson, was publicly displayed for his enemies to mock. Yet, unlike Samson, he walked into his death with complete willingness and unblemished innocence. And he didn't stay in the grave. The good news of Samson's story is the same message many of us sing to our children: we are weak, but God is strong. If we put our hope in ourselves or others we become like Samson: weak and enslaved. Samson is a reminder that our true strength and hope is found in the Lord. Jesus, the ultimate Judge, has now come, and through his life, death, and resurrection he has won the victory for every sinner who, like Samson, trusts in God's strength rather than their own. Though Samson spent his life pursuing other gods, in the end he at last acknowledged the source of his strength: "God . . . please strengthen me," and he became strong again ([Judg. 16:28](#)). Thus, Samson is named in Hebrews as an example of those who "through faith . . . were made strong out of weakness" ([Heb. 11:33-34](#)). In the same way, all those who acknowledge their weakness and put their hope in Jesus will be saved, and will find their strength restored.