

JUDGES 15-16

The Struggles of Samson

Proverbs 16:18

Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Here Solomon is warning us of the consequences of pride.

Destruction follows pride.

And a haughty spirit? Haughty is another word for arrogance.

And with this arrogance comes a fall.

How often do we get consumed with ourselves?

What we think is important, things that we want, things that we selfishly want to do?

Have we examined our motives?

Have we considered how God may want to use our lives or are we striving to live out our own agenda?

Is Jesus REALLY Lord of my life? Or am I?

As we look at Samson, we must ask these questions of him as well.

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH FOCUS

1. How did God want to use Samson?

Judges 13:5

"For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

2. What did Samson seek to fulfill that call?

So far, not really anything.

Judges 15:1

After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, "Let me go in to my wife, into her room." But her father would not permit him to go in.

After giving a riddle and losing a bet, Samson kills 30 men to pay off the debt.

He is angry and leaves his wife for 7 days and now, he returns to her.

Samson went to visit his wife and thought a young goat would make everything better.

Apparently this is a worthy gift for a woman from a man.

(***Genesis 38:17*** Judah & Tamar)

The wheat harvest was in late May/early June.

Judges 15:2

Her father said, "I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore, I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead."

It appears that Samson didn't know his wife was given to his best man.

So dad says, take her younger sister.

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SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH FOCUS SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH HIS EMOTIONS

Judges 15:3

And Samson said to them, "This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!"

Samson is not happy! (and he was blameless prior to this?)

Judges 15:4-5

Then Samson went and caught 300 foxes; and he took torches, turned the foxes tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails.

When he had set the torches on fire, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves.

For me, I struggle with this one.

Parting of the sea, I believe it... catching 300 foxes?

Tying them together in pairs at the tail with a torch?

The Hebrew word for foxes could also be translated jackals.

- So if it is jackals, jackals are known to run in packs of up to 200.
- It doesn't say that Samson didn't have any help.
- It doesn't say that Samson did it all in one day.

Samson actions burned up all of the Philistine crops in this area!

Did you know that God actually addresses this crime?

Exodus 22:6

"If fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that stacked grain, standing grain, or the field is consumed, he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

*Violence instigates more violence!

Judges 15:6

Then the Philistines said, "Who has done this?" And they answered, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion." So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

Their own people turned on the father and his daughter:

- Why did the Philistines think the Timnite dad & daughter were responsible for Samson's actions?
- Remember what Samson did in ***Judges 14:19?***
He murdered 30 Philistine men in Ashkelon to pay off a bet that he had made.

Instead of going after Samson, they kill his bride and her father.

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH FOCUS SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH HIS EMOTIONS SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH HIS TEMPER

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Judges 15:7-8

Samson said to them, "Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease."

So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

Samson takes revenge! Even though his temporary father-in-law gave Samson's bride to another man.

This really shows the depravity of the Philistine people.

They want to "teach" Samson a lesson and burn the bride and her father alive.

Yet because of Samson's lack of self-control and disobedience, all of this happened at a great personal cost to Samson.

We should consider that if Samson was obedient to the Lord, God could have used these circumstances to bless Samson instead of the circumstances causing emotional turmoil.

And Samson says, once I take care of you, I'm done.

Hip and thigh-some scholars say it means dismemberment, others say it means a pile of bodies.

The statistics of this battle are not given, other than the text says **with a great slaughter**.

All of this dysfunction, God used to further His plan against the Philistines.

Judges 13, and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

What comes to mind when you see that Samson dwelt **in the cleft of the rock**?

Exodus 33:22

"So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by.

God put Moses there for protection, Samson is hiding.

The sad thing here is that we do not see Samson crying out to the Lord in any way.

Judges 15:9-10

Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi. And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" So they answered, "We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us."

Now they are looking for the Samson....and they want to burn his fields? **do to him as he has done to us.**

Judges 15:11

Then 3000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What is this you have done to us?" And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them."

Who was supposed to be ruling over Israel?

- God
- Samson was the appointed judge

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Samson's reputation was self-serving. His actions, although used by God, did not portray God's deliverance for Israel.

They burned up Samson's wife and father, so he burned their fields.

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH FOCUS

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH HIS EMOTIONS

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH HIS TEMPER

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH SELF-ESTEEM

Judges 15:12

But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines." Then Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves."

Israel was able to gather 3000 men to go find Samson, yet not able to rally men to defeat the Philistines (the call on Samson's life).

- What if they would have considered using Samson as an asset? A weapon?
- What if Samson would have taken a leadership role and rallied the troops against the Philistines?

"Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves."

Samson again is concerned about one thing, himself.

Judges 15:13

So they spoke to him, saying, "No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you." And they bound him with 2 new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

Agreement.....

Judges 15:14-16

When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then **the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him**; and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands. He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed 1000 men with it. Then Samson said:

***"With the jawbone of a donkey,
Heaps upon heaps,
With the jawbone of a donkey
I have slain a 1000 men!"***

Samson Killing 1000 Men

Second	Men Per Minute	Men Per Hour	Total Hours
30	2	120	8:33
15	4	240	4:17
10	6	360	2:78
5	12	720	1:39

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***Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him.
Ruwach Jehovah - breath of God***

Turn back to verse 8, notice the difference? – We are not told that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson for ***the great slaughter.***

Freedom of choice is something the Lord gives us all.
Is there something to any of this? Samson struggles with letting his emotions rule his actions!

Heaps upon heaps, piles of dead men.
A Rugby field is 120m x 68m
8,160 square meters

If you laid 1000 men down on the field it would cover almost 25% of the field.

Judges 15:17

And so it was, when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi.

Ramath Lehi-Height of a jawbone

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH FOCUS

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH HIS EMOTIONS

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH HIS TEMPER

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH SELF-ESTEEM

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH TRUSTING GOD

Now notice the next verse...

Judges 15:18

Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?"

This is the first time we see Samson pray.
He prays a selfish prayer. It's almost like he is saying *"my how God must be honored to have me assisting Him!"*

How do you pray to the Lord?
Is there anything in your prayer life that might need to change?

- Frequency?
- Attitude?
- Pride-What God wants or what you want?

Judges 15:19

So God split the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived.

Therefore, he called its name En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day.

And to our surprise, God answers Samson's prayer.

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Psalm 145:8

The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy.

En Hakkore - Spring of One calling

Does Samson believe that he is fulfilling God's call on his life?

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH FOCUS
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH HIS EMOTIONS
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH HIS TEMPER
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH SELF-ESTEEM
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH TRUSTING GOD
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH WOMEN?

Judges 16:1

Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.

There were 5 major Philistine cities:

- Ekron
- Ashdod
- Ashkelon
- Gath
- Gaza

Zorah is Samson's home and he travels all the way to Gaza to sin.

Around a 16 hour walk.

But does he really go there to sin?

Judges 16:2-3

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." 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.

We might consider that Samson had other plans and he went to a harlot to hide.

Remember the spies hiding in Jericho in **Joshua 2**. They went in to a harlot Rahab to hide because they were spying out the land and specifically Jericho. There are a few of elements that connect the activities of the spies in Jericho with what Samson was doing in Gaza.

1. A female prostitute is involved in each account. **Joshua 2:1;**
Judges 16:1

2. In both accounts, the men **enter** or **go in** and stay with the prostitute.

Have you noticed that we have never suspected that the spies in **Joshua 2** engaged in illicit sexual activity? However, we all suspect Samson.



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3. The inhabitants of Jericho and Gaza discover the presence and intent of the spies and plan for their capture. ***Joshua 2:2; Judges 16:2***
4. The spies and Samson escape from the town in dramatic and memorable ways. The spies are hidden by Rahab and escape through her window during the night (***Joshua 2:15***). Samson also escaped during the night and took with him the city gates (***Judges 16:3***).

In this culture, if you are visiting a town, you would enter the city square and chances are, someone would show you hospitality and offer to put you up for the evening.

But if you are not wanting to be known, you would go to the house of a harlot.

Again, we should consider that Samson may have been seeking to weaken this stronghold of the Philistines, 1 of 5 cities.

Remember, we are reading about 8-9 vignettes of Samson's life in a 20-year period of him being a judge. But maybe Samson had a plan?

It is good for us to be cautious, but yet this reveals something in us. We often always assume the worst in people.

THE GATES

This is the early time of the Iron Age. 1300 BC-700 AD.

Gates were roughly 2 stories high and wide enough to drive a small car through.

Cities had one main entrance or gate.

So the men of Gaza assumed that if that's the way Samson came in, he would leave the same way. They thought he would stay all-night.

But at midnight, he takes the gates and the post and carries them to Hebron, 40 miles away. You can walk roughly 2.5 miles an hour...16 hours

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH FOCUS

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SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH TRUSTING GOD

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH WOMEN?

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH WOMEN

DELILAH

Judges 16:4

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

This is the first woman in Samson's life that ***he loved***.

Delilah-feeble or to make feeble

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Judges 16:5

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 1100 pieces of silver."

5 major cities

5 lords

1100 pieces of silver=140 lbs

5500 pieces total=700 lbs

This is equivalent to 162,400 pounds (English currency).

What do you think is Delilah's motivation?

What is Delilah willing to do to get this information?

Judges 16:6-9

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

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."

So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her 7 fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them.

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.

Delilah ask where his strength comes from, so he probably wasn't some muscle bound guy like the bodybuilders of our day. Chances are he was an ordinary size man.

Samson is so callous and he thinks that he is invincible, it's almost like he is toying with her. And he is! He lets her tie him up!

And there are men hiding in her room. Delilah announces his enemies are there and he breaks free.

What did he do to these men? We don't know but yet he continues this relationship with Delilah.

Samson had a weakness, women!

Proverbs 7

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH FOCUS

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SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH TRUSTING GOD

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH WOMEN?

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH WOMEN

SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH DISCERNMENT

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The Struggles of Samson

Judges 16:10-12

Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with."

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."

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.

Samson has lost all sense of reality. Delilah has him wrapped around her finger. What a man would do for the love of a woman. But is this love? No!

Samson allowed this game to go on because he refuses to escape this relationship. Many people today are in situations, in similar places of sin, compromise, and bondage – and refuse to escape. Why? That is a great question!

Proverbs 7:25-27

Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways,

Do not stray into her paths;

For she has cast down many wounded,

And all who were slain by her were strong men.

Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death.

Judges 16:13-14

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 7 locks of my head into the web of the loom"—

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.

Delilah does not love him. Remember she is being paid off with over 162,000 pounds! That is a lot of motivation. Yet Samson continues to be blinded by this relationship.

Judges 16:4

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

We have coined a term "Love is Blind" but that phrase is false. Love is not blind! The challenge here is that Samson loved Delilah, but Delilah did not love Samson.

He is getting closer; the hair is now involved.

Judges 16:15

Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these 3 times, and have not told me where your great strength lies." What is love?

- Telling me what I want to hear?
- Giving me what I want you to give me?
- Doing for me what I want you to do?

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Why does Delilah want to know Samson's secret?

- She is getting paid a lot of money to get information.
- If she doesn't get the information, no payoff!

Who is truly being mocked? Samson!

Judges 16:16-17

And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, 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."

Judges 16:16 (NLT)

She tormented him with her nagging day after day until he was sick to death of it.

Samson has been here before - ***Judges 14:15-18***

- Pestering
- Manipulation
- Ulterior motive

What was Delilah's expectation of Samson?

Samson was to yield his call of God to prove his love for Delilah.

he told her all his heart..

He really loved her, or did he?

Samson was willing to destroy himself, his relationship with God and the nation he was to lead, for a woman that did not love him.

Love would not demand self-destruction of someone nor demand a compromise with God.

Greg Laurie tells the story of when he started dating his wife Cathie.

He told her, *if you ever get between me and my relationship with God, its over.*

Delilah revealed her heart, "If you do for me what I want you to do, then that will prove to me your love." Yet, was this Samson's heart towards God?

Judges 16:18-20

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.

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.

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.

Tunnel Vision-Samson was so sensitive to Delilah, yet had become callous to God.

He didn't even notice he was shaved ***and his strength left him...***

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Why now? After all of the disobedience in Samson's life, why did cutting his hair end it all?

The cutting of the hair proclaimed that the Nazarite vow was over.
Samson's vow was over.

Samson's hair was not the source of his strength, his hair was a symbol of his commitment to the Lord.

God wanted to use Samson, yet this relationship with Delilah literally brought him to his knees.

Samson had lived a life with repetitive compromise for so long that he became callous. His sin didn't matter. He conditioned himself that he could "get away" with sinning.

Moses warned Israel as they were heading into the Promised Land.
There would be consequences for their sin and lack of obedience.

Numbers 32:23

"But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and **be sure your sin will find you out.**

Romans 6:1-4

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! **How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so **we also should walk in newness of life.****

We so often mistake God's patience, His mercy and His grace for His acceptance of our sin.

We must spend time in God's word to know what sin is! If we are not convicted about the sin in our lives, something is wrong. We should be walking **in newness of life.**

**SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH FOCUS
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH HIS EMOTIONS
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH HIS TEMPER
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH SELF-ESTEEM
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH TRUSTING GOD
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH WOMEN?
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH WOMEN
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH DISCERNMENT
SAMSON STRUGGLES WITH SAMSON**

Judges 16:21-27

Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison. However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.

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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!"

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."

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.

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."

Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there—about 3000 men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed.

Is this how God wanted to use Samson?

Serving the Lord brings blessing to our lives in spite of our circumstances.
Samson had so much potential.

Judges 16:28

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!"

Samson prays for the 2nd time and it is still about Samson.
Samson wants vengeance for the Philistines taking his eyes.
Nothing of humility or obedience to God yet God answers.
Why? Because God can still use Samson.

Judges 16:29-31

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.

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.

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.

What characteristics do we see in Samson?
What characteristics do we see in God?
How can this story be applied in my life as a follower of Jesus?

Hebrews 11:32-34

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and **Samson** and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.