

JUDGES SESSION #19

As promised, we have now come to...

I. Deadly Delilah

Judg 16:4-14

⁴Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah. ⁵And 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."

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

⁷And 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."

⁸So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. ⁹Now *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.

¹⁰Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with."

¹¹So 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."

¹²Therefore 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.

¹³Delilah 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" —

¹⁴So 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.

- it's possible that **Delilah** was an Israelite — but if so, she was certainly a Philistine at heart
 - her name has since become a synonym for the 'seductive lady'
- in vs. 5 we read that it was "the lords of the Philistines" who were anxious to capture Samson — these were probably the leaders of the 5 main Philistine cities
 - their involvement indicates the **national** threat Samson now poses to the Philistines by this time
 - and the large reward offered to Delilah shows how serious they were about this too

- Philistines believed in **magic** & thought Samson's strength must be magical
 - so **Samson plays** with them as he ridicules their belief in magic
 - but he is playing with more than a game – he's playing with his **vow**
 - the 1st binding was done with 7 fresh bowstrings – **seven** cords ...perhaps a picture of Samson's 7 locks of hair & God's seven-fold Spirit on whom he depends for strength
 - the 3rd binding is much closer to home as it directly involved weaving the **seven locks** of his hair into the web of a loom
- Why didn't Samson catch on to what was happening here? After all, she clearly told him right from the beginning that she was trying to find out "with what you may be bound to **afflict** you!" ...was he too self-confident?
- or had his passion simply blinded him?
 - someone defined "**Lust** as anything that steams the windows of our soul and blurs our vision"
 - the 3rd try – weaving his **hair** into the loom – gets very close to the real answer of what made Samson strong – and we see the danger looming (pardon the pun!)
 - magic is an illusion – there is no need to fear it; but we must **fear compromise**
 - Samson doesn't and is totally pulled down
 - 20 yrs earlier he recognized the nagging of his wife at Timnath as a sign of betrayal; but now he either forgets that lesson or is totally blinded by lust

Judg 16:15-21

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."

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. 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.

²¹ 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.

- apparently some time had passed here and the Philistines had given up & gone
 - but Samson had kept on visiting Delilah; and she kept trying to get his secret until finally she had success
- so what *was* the **source** of Samson's strength?
 - it was not his *hair*; but the **Lord**, who was with him in special way due to his Nazirite vow represented by his uncut hair (perhaps the last of the vow elements not yet broken)

- the reality of his broken commitment to God became clear as the outward sign of that commitment, his unshaven hair, was removed

Let me quote Gary Inrig again who gives us **Five Truths about Temptation:**

1) moral compromise always makes us **vulnerable**

- his problem began with a sinful relationship with Delilah
- we do not fall off a cliff morally; we roll down a slope, going faster & faster
 - the **FIRST** steps are the crucial issues...they may be small matters, but they are critical because they set us moving in the wrong direction

2) temptation comes to us in **attractive** packages

- Satan doesn't tempt us with things that have no appeal for us ...and he knows the cracks in our armour!
- Oscar Wilde: "I can resist anything...except temptation"

3) temptation comes when we choose the **wrong company**

- I Cor. 15:33 clearly tells us: "Bad company corrupts good character."

4) when we *toy* with temptation it **traps** us

- fresh cords...new ropes...hair woven into the loom...then hair cut off!
- Robert Orbin said, "Most people want to be delivered from temptation, but they would still like to keep in touch!"
- we must not *TOY* with temptation; we are not even to *fight* temptation; we are to **RUN** from it
- ...I Cor. 6:18 says, "flee from sexual immorality"
- ...unfortunately, as someone said: "no world record has yet been set by someone running from temptation!"

5) **self-confidence** blinds us to reality

- Samson couldn't see what was going on here!
- he thought he could handle it...but he was dead wrong!

...his fall can be traced to two things:

- a) he didn't recognize his **weakness**
- b) he didn't recognize his source of **strength**

Samson's story is a reminder that "we can choose to sin, but we cannot choose the *consequences* of our sin"

- the last phrase of vs. 20 one of the saddest in all OT: "But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him."

- when God had left him, nothing else remained but shame & defeat
- 3 words sum up his story now: "bind", "blind", and "grind" as the blind Samson grinds the grain into flour
- where does this humiliation take place?
 - ...in **Gaza!** – the scene of his earlier feat of strength

- *caution*: don't think we are stronger than Samson!
- the same weakness can afflict us, and dissipate our spiritual potential just like Samson

J. God's Grace

Judg 16:22-31

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

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."

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. 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!" 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.

- forgiveness is immediate, but restoration is gradual – it took *time* for his hair to grow as he pushed that millstone around and around

- and we must note that the **consequences of sin** are not erased

- Samson regained his hair, and his strength; but not his eyes

What is **different** here about Samson's prayer?

- this is actually his first *formal* prayer to God, uttered in a house of *pagan* worship
- ...he uses 3 of the biblical terms for God (Adonai, Jehovah, Elohim)
- ...it is clear that he is **trusting** wholeheartedly in God

- in earlier incidents, God's Spirit had come upon him **unasked**; here he **asks** for God's strengthening

- this is the only time he asked *before* using his strength; he has experienced repentance & learned something from the lessons of failure which resulted in new faith

- and he has accepted **forgiveness**
 - “Christians are notorious for **remembering** what they should **forget** and **forgetting** what they should **remember**.”
- we don't need to *know* we are in need before God will help us; but when we *are* in need, we can be assured that we can **ask** for help
- **God's grace** is seen in fact that He took the results of Samson's failure (his blindness and captivity) and used his apparent weaknesses to win a great victory
 - restoration is not based on *performance*, but on God's grace
- one of the most helpful features in Microsoft's recent Windows systems is called “**system restore**”
 - if your computer crashes (Windows always does, of course!) and the system gets messed up, all you have to do is restart it, select “system restore”, specify the date you want the computer to reset at...and ‘wonderful!’ – the problem is solved, your programs work again ...all the things you somehow messed up are put back the way they were as of that earlier day
- wouldn't this be a great feature for human lives?!
 - we could go back to the day before we messed up in our lives just by hitting “system restore”!
- maybe you can remember the day when things crashed for you—and you'd give anything you own to restore things to the way they were.
- Samson's life story shows us that God won't erase all the consequences of our actions, but he **promises** something even *better*: to **forgive** us, to work for the highest good even through what is bad, and one day to make all things new.
- God's grace provides His divine “system restore” for us this week
 - it can be a brand new week, our record cleaned & restored by God's forgiveness through his gift of grace