

Samson #5 - Tragic Legacy

by Andrew Foster

The sermon explores the tragic legacy of Samson and the consequences of indulging sin, emphasizing the importance of resisting sin and walking with God.

Duration: 1:00:49

Scripture: Judges 7:10, Judges 18:11, Matthew 6:33, 2 Peter 1:3-8

Topics: "Samson"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the sad state of the Church of Christ, which has become blind and defeated, giving the wicked reason to mock God's people. The preacher emphasizes the importance of knowing Christ and realizing the exceeding great and precious promises that God has given to his people. He refers to the story of Samson, who was reduced to a brute beast by the Philistines, highlighting the consequences of being captive to sin. The preacher also quotes the Apostle Paul and the book of 2 Peter to emphasize the struggle between the inward delight in God's law and the law of sin in one's members.

Transcript

Let me add my own words of welcome to you today. It's nice to see you back again. And if you're here for the first time, we welcome you in the Savior's name.

We're coming back to the book of Judges, chapter 16, and we'll read at the verse 21. I hope those of you that were here yesterday did what I asked you to do and read through chapter 17 and 18. Just for the sake of time, obviously, we're not going to read those chapters, but we're going to give a brief overview of their content as we finish up this morning.

Let's read in Judges 16, verse 21. But the Philistines took him, that's Samson of course, and put out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza, bound him with fetters of brass, and he did grind in the prison house, albeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon, their god, and to rejoice.

For they said, Our God hath delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hand. And when the people saw him, they praised their God. For they said, Our God hath delivered into our hands our enemy and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

It came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house, and he made them sport, and they set him between the pillars. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

Now the house was full of men and women, and all the lords of the Philistines were there. And there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson called unto the Lord and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines from my two eyes.

And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people that were therein.

So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life. Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtol in the burying place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

Amen. And we're going to take a moment to pray for God's help as we look at the word together. Let's each one seek the Lord.

And dear Christian, earnestly pray that the Lord will speak to your heart today. Our Father, we come to thee in the name of the Lord Jesus. We come, Lord, earnestly soliciting the sound of thy voice, calling upon thee, O God, that thou would speak to our hearts today.

We would bring to thee those words of counsel that Eli gave to Samuel so long ago. Speak, Lord. Thy servant hear it.

Give us that servant's heart, we pray. Give us that prayerful heart that desires God to speak, and give us the servant's response to it. Give us a meek and a contrite heart, Lord, that we might hear thee and that we might obey thee, learning from thy word.

We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, we had to leave off yesterday as we were pursuing the thought of the consequences of sin in Samson's life.

We have seen that he was a child of God, a man mightily used by the Lord on occasions over his twenty-year ministry, wonderfully filled with the Holy Ghost, and mightily used by God to strike against the enemies of God and of his people. We have been developing the theme of the pursuit of revival and restoration, and how there are lessons that we can learn from Samson's experience, learning from the positive things that are recorded about his life, what we are to seek for and what we are to be, learning from the negative things that are recorded for our benefit in Scripture about his life and his experience that we might know what we are to avoid if we are to further the cause of God among his people. We need to see a shaking off of the Philistine shackles of our day.

We need to see the church of Jesus Christ emerge from the bondage that it has got itself into by its forsaking of God, by its sin and backsliding and compromise. It has got itself to the place where it has no power, got itself to the place where it has lost out with God, and there is a need for a reviving and a restoring work to be done. We were considering especially last time how the indulgence of the flesh in

Samson's life was going to reduce him to the point where he was useless, reducing him sadly to the place where his ministry was terminated and there was that sad end that he came to.

And we had to leave it before we got to look at what I have called the tragedy of indulging sin. God has called his people to cut off sin, to mortify the deeds of the body, to mortify the actions of our members. We are not to yield them to sin.

We are to crucify those actions day by day and to live in the Spirit. Walk in the Spirit, the apostle wrote, that you might not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. That is the rule of Christian living and that is where the church of Christ must get back to.

But what if it is otherwise? What if there is a child of God who has the very mistaken and unbiblical and wicked idea of thinking that I can live for God and yet at the same time indulge the world. I can live in a carnal fashion. I can indulge my own appetites, the desires of the flesh with impunity.

I am a child of God and I can sin with impunity. There are Christians who misguidedly feel that to be the case. But I want us to look here at the tragedy of living that way.

That is how Samson lived on occasion, not consistently through his life. There were periods when he walked with God. But we have this sad record in God's Word where his weaknesses and his sins and his blemishes are pointed out for our learning.

Did he live in that way with impunity? Did he consort with the harlot in Gaza? Did he consort with Delilah who was little better without consequence? Yes, the Lord graciously, mercifully, wonderfully and sovereignly stepped in and delivered Samson on those occasions and delivered him from his madness and his folly and caused him to escape the consequences, the more fatal consequences of his sin on the occasion. But there were consequences. And this chapter especially, in the verses we read and in others that we did not take the time to read, record for us the tragedy of indulging sin.

Here is a warning signpost in God's Word that you and I must take heed to. And we're going to quickly just look at some of the details here that illustrate for us the tragedy of indulging carnality in the life of a child of God. You will see if we back up to begin with to verse 16 and 17.

We're going back now to his activity with Delilah. And it came to pass when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him so that his soul was vexed unto death, that he told her all his heart and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head, for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb. If I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man.

Here is one of the first evidences of the tragedy of sin, the consequences of indulging the flesh in his life. He had trifled with Delilah. He had played these foolish games with her.

Each time, on a number of occasions previously, God had wonderfully stepped in and delivered Samson from the folly of his ways. But there comes a point where Samson yields now to Delilah's pressure. He had resisted her pressure for the time and told her lies.

But he had resisted the pressure to betray the secret of his consecration to God. But eventually, his resistance breaks down. You cannot keep on resisting what you consciously trifle with.

You cannot trifle with sin and at the same time maintain a resistance against it, any more than you can trifle with the germs that will produce disease in your system and maintain a perfect immunity. You cannot do it. Sooner or later, you will fall before that disease because you have trifled with it.

You may do so successfully a time or two, but eventually, the resistance will be worn down and you will succumb. Put yourself in the world's company like Lot did. Look at the testimony of the scripture concerning the life of Lot.

And even the ungodly men of Sodom bore record to the fact that he came into sojourn, literally to be a stranger. That's what the word means. That was his ambition.

That's how he deluded himself. I'm going to be here as a pilgrim. No, to be a pilgrim, you had to be out in Hebron where Abraham was.

You can't be a pilgrim in Sodom. You can go in as a pilgrim, but you'll not remain a pilgrim. Even the wicked men of Sodom, as they assault Lot's house in that time where he's about to be carried out by the angels, they bear witness to this fact.

He came to sojourn. He came to be a stranger, but Lot had no witness, no testimony. You look at the vile suggestions that Lot made for the placating of that evil mob at his house.

Lot had yielded to a large measure to the ways of Sodom, even though he went in with the grandiose intention of being a stranger and a pilgrim there. You trifle with sin, it will always have this effect. You will, you will.

You cannot avoid your resistance to that sin being broken down. Put yourself in the world's company. You will eventually, and quicker than you think, be overcome by that company.

Expose yourself to the ways of the world consciously. Oh, you might start to do it with the idea that I'm strong enough to maintain a witness against it. No, it will overcome you.

It will. And Delilah, with her pressure, overcame him. You remember I pointed out yesterday the meaning of Delilah's name.

Weakness, debilitation, impoverishment. Samson stared that in the face every time he looked at Delilah. He stared at weakness in the face.

He didn't heed the warning, and eventually he was overcome by it. It can be no other way. Look at how this progresses.

Verse 19, she made him sleep. She made him sleep upon her knees. He sleeps in the presence of danger until he is robbed of his power.

He sleeps. In the previous episode, you may remember, back at the beginning of chapter 16, where Samson sinfully had gone to be with the harlot and gazza, we read that he lay till midnight and arose at midnight. A strange time to get up.

I believe that we can at least suggest very strongly that God wakened him. He was sleeping, but God wakened him. And impressed upon him, Samson, you are in fatal danger here.

The men of gaza have a plan to kill you. They've locked the city gates. So, Samson wasn't a brute of a man, naturally speaking.

His power is the power of God. When he took gates, bars, posts and everything out of the city walls and carried them up to the top of a hill before Hebron, that was the power of God. It was God who wakened him.

God worked sovereignly, despite what Samson was, despite what his folly deserved. God worked to get him out of there. But see what happens now? He has indulged his carnality, he has indulged his sin, he has indulged the wicked desires of his own heart, contrary to the prompting of the Holy Ghost.

And he sleeps. And God didn't wake him up. He sleeps.

He felt comfortable and safe. Oh, what a pathetic picture there is here. But as I was impressing upon you yesterday, remember this is God's mirror.

Here is your reflection, here is mine. This is not just Samson, this is me, this is you. It is so easy to become comfortable in the place of danger.

In the place, Samson didn't realize it, but look what's on the line here. His very life is on the line, his usefulness to God is on the line, his ministry is on the line, his Nazarite consecration to God is on the line, and he is sleeping blissfully. God's people today, I fear, find themselves more often than not in that condition.

Speaking generally of the Church of Christ, it courts disaster and it doesn't even know it. It's courting disaster by courting the world, indulging the flesh, and it sleeps. Oh, how we need an awakening.

How we need an awakening. But here is the tragedy of indulged sin in Samson's life as the tragedy unfolds all around him. He's sleeping.

Verse 20, another element of this tragedy. She said the Philistines be upon thee, Samson, and he awoke out of his sleep and said, I will go out as at other times before and shake myself, and he wist or knew not that the Lord was departed from him. He's ignorant of the absence of God's presence.

Ignorant of the absence of God's presence. You think you'd know if the Lord left you alone? I think that it is fair comment to make that if the Lord were to leave you, most Christians wouldn't know because they haven't taken the time to be with the Lord. Mary and Joseph, you remember them? There were none physically, naturally closer to the Lord than they, and yet they went a day's journey without him, supposing him to be in the company.

You ever done that? We have done that. I think if there's a difference between our experience and Mary and Joseph's experience, we probably have to confess we've gone more than one day. Supposing him to be in the company.

It's not that they had entirely forgotten him. They supposed that he would just tag along. Don't you think that's what motivated the legacy in believers? They were worshipping.

They were serving God, they thought. Christ was outside the door. Those words in Revelation 3 and 20, you must never forget, were never written to sinners, though they may be applied to sinners.

They were never written to sinners. They were written to a New Testament church. A first century apostolic church.

Christ was outside. Samson, you can picture him awaking himself out of sleep and he shakes himself. He doesn't know God has left him.

Because long before this point had been reached, Samson had lost the presence of God. He hadn't been seeking God. He hadn't been walking with God.

And so when the Lord withdrew, Samson wasn't aware. His persistent indulgence of the flesh cost him the presence of God, cost him the power of God. And it takes more than just a shaking of ourselves to go on.

We can come to meetings like this, and believe me, it's easier to do than you might think. We can shake ourselves. Determine we're going to do more for God.

Determine we're going to go out, we're going to deal with the enemies of God. But if we haven't met God, or if we've been living in a fashion that has distanced us from God, it takes more than that kind of a shake. It takes much more than that kind of a carnal shaking of ourselves and an asserting of ourselves.

I can see Samson in my mind's eye. And I can see him because I can see what way my own heart works. And it's so easy to preen ourselves.

We've done this before. We're going to fix those Philistines. Look at how many times we've played games already here in Delilah's chamber, and the Philistines have jumped on me thinking that they had the better of me.

And God came and helped me. It takes more than that kind of a stirring. I suggest to you that Samson thought along those lines, God has helped me before, he'll help me again.

You can think like that, I suggest to you, you can even pray like that. But if you have distanced yourself from God by the indulgence of sin and by a repeated ignoring of the warnings that God has given, as he did here in this passage, we looked at them yesterday, you can shake yourself in that fashion as much as you like, and you'll meet the enemy on your own. God had left us.

God had withdrawn. How it gets worse from here, does it not? As we pursue the tragedy of indulging the flesh, he becomes the sleeve of the Philistines. Look at verse 21.

Get your eye on the text there. But the Philistines took him. Oh, he shook himself.

But the Philistines took him. Is he a man of God? Yes, he is. His name's still in Hebrews 11.

Is he a man that God used in the past at this point in the power of the Holy Ghost? Yes, he is. Will God use him again? Yes, he will. But at this point, he becomes the sleeve of the Philistines.

He must learn the hard way that no child of God can indulge sin or worldly mindedness or the carnality of their own wicked heart with impunity. There is a price to pay. Verse 21.

They take him. They put out his eyes. They bring him to Gaza.

They bind him with fetters of brass. He did grind in the prison house. Samson is reduced here to the level of a brute beast.

The helpless, bound, shorn lackey of the Philistines doing their will and their pleasure. Doing the round on that mill in the prison house. Doing the work of an animal.

Can it really be? That's what God says he was reduced to. You should never forget the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 7. Verse 22. He says, I delight in the law of God after the inward man.

That's the new man. Every child of God knows that delight. Every true born Christian has that delight.

That is the new inclination. That is regeneration. I delight in the law of God after the inward man.

But I see another law and my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Paul wrote these words. Do not make the mistake.

Paul wrote these words as a man filled with the Holy Ghost. A man delighting in the law of God. And yet as he looked into his own heart he recognized that within his being there was the working of what through scripture is described as the flesh.

The warring of the flesh against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh that he wrote to the Galatians of. And even Paul, mightily used of God, said I see it. It's there.

It's there. It's there whether you see it or not. If you're a Christian, it's there.

Even if you want to ignore it, it's there. The flesh is there. And see how Paul describes it.

The law of sin working in my members what to bring me into captivity. That's where Samson ended up. In one sense we can say that at some periods in his life he stood shoulder to shoulder with the Apostle Paul delighting in the law of God, filled with the Holy Ghost, doing the will of God.

But tragically there were those seasons where he gave way to the law of sin that worked within his members. Here we see worked out even physically in his experience. You see it.

He's a slave. He's in prison bringing me into captivity. You can't play with sin.

None of us can. Paul feared captivity. If Paul feared and those beautiful words that he wrote to the Corinthians, I keep under my body lest when I preach to others I myself should be a cast away.

Not that he would lose his soul. No. Paul was a child of God utterly assured of heaven, but that he would be cast away as a useful servant.

That he would end where Samson ended. And Paul, we give the literal idea of the words that he uses. He says, I beat myself black and blue keeping under the body.

It's just parallel to the imagery that he uses elsewhere of the crucifying of the flesh, of the dying to self and sin daily. Lest I end up in that place of captivity useless for God. Samson at times stood shoulder to shoulder with Paul in that desire.

But look where he's at now. He loses his vision, physically speaking. And of course I think we must see the spiritual parallel there.

The blindness now descends upon Samson. That illustrates the blindness of soul that had descended upon him prior to this. He didn't see what Delilah was.

He didn't see that sign that we talked about yesterday that was written in her very person when her name means weakness and debilitation. He didn't see it. Why? Because carnality was closing his eyes.

Long before he closed them in sleep, he was slumbering spiritually and saw nothing. And now he loses his physical sight as a testimony to the blindness of heart that had descended upon him. I feel compelled to emphasize again by the question, can this happen to a child of God? Can a child of God become so blind spiritually? Oh yes.

Does God open the eyes in regeneration? Absolutely. He opens the understanding to see, as Paul put it so beautifully, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Yes, that's what regeneration does.

But that vision that God gives the child of God, there is an absolute sense in which it's never lost. And yet there is another in which in terms of our Christian experience and our sanctification as opposed to our justification, we see our vision grow very dim. Look at the words of Peter, 2 Peter chapter 1. And very quickly I want to read some verses here just to emphasize this point.

Let's begin at the verse 3. 2 Peter chapter 1. Turn to the place, find the word, look at them, see that they're the word of God. Not just the vain imaginations of a preacher. See God's word.

2 Peter 1 verse 3. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue and to virtue knowledge and to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, to brotherly kindness charity. And if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God has given to his people all things as they know Christ. He has given to them exceeding great and precious promises that as they realize those promises in their experience, they may be fruitful and not barren in the Christian life. They draw those things into their soul from the great storehouses of God's resource in Christ by the exercise of faith which manifests itself in these works that are displayed or described here.

Verse 9, but he that lacketh these things was never saved. Not in this instance. There is an area where only God can tell where you have a Christian who has got to where Samson got to, or where Lot got to in Sodom.

You couldn't tell looking at the evidence. If we only had the snapshot of Lot that we do in the book of Genesis, you'd never know he was a Christian. You would have condemned him to hell as an unregenerate rascal.

Peter tells us he was a righteous man. Even when he was in Sodom, he was a righteous man. There is a point there where no man can infallibly say you are saved or you are not saved.

Now if a Christian is not bearing fruit, he has no business indulging in an assurance of salvation, and we must never encourage that. The man says he is a saint. He is not living like a saint.

I treat him like a sinner until he proves otherwise. Because I don't know. But look at verse 9, but he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

You are talking here about the experience of a man that God has pardoned. Oh, but he hasn't grown in grace. He has gone the way of the world.

He has indulged carnality as Samson did. He's blind. If I might generalize again about the church of Christ today, think of the words of the prophet Isaiah, we are like blind men, like those that grope in the dark at noonday.

Where is the vision? Where is the sight of God and his glory? Where is the vision for souls? Where is the vision for holiness? Where is the vision for a walk with God? Where is the vision that can discern sin and run from it and discern uncleanness and put it away? He that lacketh these things is blind. Going back to chapter 16 in Judges, the blind man now becomes the butt of Philistine laughter, the object of sport. No child of God at any time can be a check upon the enemy when in their life there is evidence of indulged carnality.

The Philistines laughed. God's champion. They laughed.

He was an entertainment. Now there is a subject where we could go off on a tangent. Is that not what the church has become today? A sort of a lunatic novelty out there on the fringes of society to be laughed at.

It is one thing for the ungodly to indulge their wicked hostility to God and mock God's people in a day of power. They will do that. But when the church of Christ, by its blindness, by its defeat, and as the evidences of its carnality are seen, give the wicked reason to laugh, that is sad.

Again, let me remind you of Lot, the righteous man who tormented his soul every day in Sodom and still he stayed. God is going to pour out his wrath. He goes to speak to his sons-in-law and what do we read? He seemed as one that mocked.

As far as they were concerned he was just a clown, an entertainer, a jester to be laughed at. Why? Because his words, though they were true, absolutely true, carried no weight because of his testimony. He brings shame.

Samson does here upon the name of God and the cause of God and he is the means of the Philistines honoring their idol. You imagine this. Think of it.

Think of the shame. The Philistine fish god honored above the God of heaven. Why? Because there's Samson.

That's why. Our God has beaten Jehovah's champion. Look at him.

A blind, poor, forsaken, wretch that we have been able to reduce to the level of a performing animal in a circus. What a great God Dagon is. My brother was talking yesterday about responsibility for encouraging others in sin and wickedness.

Don't you see that happening here? You ever think of the fact that the church of Christ in its broken, impoverished, worldly-minded state is encouraging all those around us to pursue idolatry? Why would they think anything of God? Why would they pay the least attention to what the Bible says about God or about

the God we might even try to share with them and our witness to them? Why would they pay the least attention? They don't see the power of God in our lives. They don't see that the gospel makes a difference between you and them. You look like them, you live like them, you talk like them, you dress like them, you go where they go, and yet you try to tell them, I'm different? I don't see it.

You try to tell them, God has made such a difference in my life? Really? Really? I can't see it. Dagon was exalted and honored. His indulgence of sin ultimately brings him down to death among his enemies.

Oh, there was a difference between Samson and the Philistines. Yes, there was. God made a difference in the depths of Samson's being.

There was a difference. If you were to step in to the devastation that's described here at the end of chapter 16, in your mind's eye now, pick your way through the rubble of that ruined temple. The broken, shattered bodies of Philistines, and there among them, you couldn't tell the difference physically.

Right there, among them, lies the shattered, broken remains of a man of God. He perishes among his enemies. His potential, in many ways, is unrealized.

Oh, he accomplished something for God, there's no question. But that's overshadowed so heavily by the sin and the carnality of the scriptural narrative. He dies as a young man, less than 40 years of age, perishing among the enemies.

That's a sad thing. That's why I'm speaking to you about the tragedy of indulging sin. But I want you to notice something else here.

Even in his ruined state, God used Samson again. At the last, broken, ruined, a slave to the Philistines, but God used him again. You know why that's in the Bible? That's there to encourage you and me.

That's there to leave every Christian without excuse for doing nothing. I have met Christians, genuine believers, who have to lament all the things I've done to grieve God. I look into my own heart and say, and I see such a checkered history and a history of failure.

And they lament and they groan over the sin that is real, the consequences that are real, I don't deny them, they can't be denied. But that's where they stop. I can't do anything because of the mess I've made in the past.

That's dead wrong. Look at Samson. He was not totally set aside by the Lord.

In mercy to him, God granted him his dying wish for one more victory, one more experience of the power of God over those that had conquered him. And there I think you have one of the infallible evidences that Samson was indeed a child of God. He wasn't going to die in defeat.

He said, Lord, give me one more victory, even if it kills me. Give me a victory. Give me the taste again of the power of God.

And that's one of those evidences where you can bring some light into that area I was talking about a few minutes ago. Even the man that has been overcome, made blind and reduced to a captive by the wicked lust of his own heart, if he's a genuine child of God, this will be his prayer, O God, give me again a taste of victory. There was a return to devotion in Samson's life at this late stage, symbolized in the expression of verse 22, howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

Well, that was just the external sign, the Nazarite vow that he had taken had been put upon him in childhood. That was just the external sign. But it represented a work that was going on in Samson's heart.

He's coming back. He's getting back to the consecration of heart that once he enjoyed. Can it be regained in the prison house in Gaza? Yes, it can.

Will he be able to return to the ministry he had before? No. Will he ever be able to do many of the things that he could do before? No. But he can still do something for God.

And in the prison house, there is a returning of devotion in Samson's heart, and we find that expressed especially in the verse 28. For as he's the object of scorn to the Philistines, he prays, O Lord God. I hope you know the significance of the different names of God that are used in the scriptures.

Our authorized version makes it a little easier for us to pick up on some of the different original names that are used. And where you have the word Lord in English, in capitals, you'll recognize that's in almost every instance, that is the use of the Hebrew name Jehovah. When you have the English word God in those small capitals, it's the English word Jehovah.

And usually that occurs where there is the use of a second Hebrew word that's translated Lord in the English, only in the regular cases it is here in verse 28. It's the Hebrew name Adonai. My Master.

That's what he says here. I can't take time for us to think too long about the significance of that expression. My Master.

My Owner. Jehovah. The unchanging God of mercy and grace is my Master.

Here I am a lackey of the Philistines, but I'm a servant of God. This is what he professes. Is it not beautiful to see that consecration return to you in the place of prayer? I can't even begin to imagine the heartbreak that must have filled Samson's heart as he realizes what a fool I have been.

What madness it has been to indulge those wicked desires of my own flesh. Look where it has brought me, but I'm still a servant of God at heart. And right now there is born within this soul, Lord, I want to serve.

At this point I don't suppose he has any firm ideas of what's going to be accomplished. He just knows he wants to do something to bring that temple down, to bring shame and dig and to show them who God is. To strike once more against the Philistines.

And as he leans his arms on those pillars, what's he saying? Lord, I want to serve. I have to be led here by the hand. I want to do something.

If it kills me, I want to do something. That's the returning consecration. God and mercy stirs in Samson's heart and I cannot begin to express to you the length and the breadth and the depth and the height of the love of God and Christ to a poor wretch who is a servant, who has failed so miserably and brought such shame on the Lord's name.

And yet God gives Samson the greatest victory. He slew more in his death than he did in his life. Dear Christian, do not sit down and weep and lament even though your own sin and worldliness has got you to the prison house in Gaza, to the place where the wicked that you would want to see reached and overcome by the gospel all around you may just laugh you to scorn because of your powerlessness and your emptiness and your uselessness.

Don't sit down and weep. God that redeemed you is still Jehovah. He is still the same.

This is the hope of Christ's church today. Have we failed? Have we sinned? Have we been overcome in many instances by the world? Yes. To our shame we have to say yes.

We're blind. We look into God's word. We don't see what we ought to see there.

Here is a book that reveals the glory of Christ and if you ask the average Christian today, we heard it mentioned. I'm not sure whether it private or public, but certainly I have heard it mentioned here as we have talked. One preacher in particular, no it was a private conversation, it took nothing to do with the Old Testament because he couldn't see Christ there.

I don't understand that. But the Bible of the Apostle Paul, the Bible of Jesus Christ himself, the Bible of all the apostles from which they preached Christ. Here is a believer who tells me he can't see Christ.

Dare I tell you that's blindness. That's blindness. But can God use his people again? Did he use Samson again? Oh my Lord Jehovah, give me victory again.

I was to deal with his legacy. Chapters 7 and 10 and 18 record for us the historical narrative. I believe it follows on from Samson's death.

You have to be careful sometimes. Chapters don't follow in chronological order. But even when they don't, there's always a reason why the Holy Ghost writes in the order in which he does.

But I take it that the order here is chronological. Now why do I speak about these chapters as the legacy of Samson? Not only because they follow on from the record of his death, but let me just have you look at chapter 18 and verse 11. These events revolve around men of the family of the Danites out of Zorah and out of Eshtoel.

You go back to chapter 13 and you'll find that when God began to use Samson, the end of chapter 13, the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtoel. Here's Samson's backyard, as it were. Here's where Samson grew up.

Here's where Samson was first used by God. Here are men who knew him. Here are men of his community, men of his neighborhood.

You look at these chapters, I'm just going to very quickly give you the outline of them. You can think about it for yourself as Samson's legacy. He left behind unconquered enemies.

The Philistines remain strong. Even as Samson dies, they still remain a significant dominant force. It wasn't until Samuel some years later, 1 Samuel 7, 13, that the 40-year captivity to the Philistines ended.

And for your own benefit, you think about this. You develop it. Samson began the work, but he didn't finish it.

Part of the reason for that is because of his sin. Who finished it? Samuel. What a contrast.

You contrast the moral character, the spiritual character of Samuel. Samuel's walk with God is epitomized, I think, in that beautiful statement in the later chapters in 1 Samuel where he comes to anoint Saul. And we read that God had uncovered Samuel's ear the day before and told him, Saul's coming.

Samuel was the intimate of God. It was Samuel who finished the Philistines. The men of Dan were told, chapter 18, verse 1, unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.

The portion God had given to them way back unto the days of Joshua. Not to this day. Centuries later, almost five centuries later, they hadn't entered into it.

Ought Samson not to have played a role in them taking their territory? I suggest to you, he ought to have. But in his own backyard, there were men who then take into their own hands and go out and act in a sinful, carnal, wicked way to try to conquer territory and take the territory that God had given to them. As they do that, they come into contact with Micah and his house of gods.

I hope if you took the time to read the chapter, you'll discover that the men of Dan go in and take Micah's gods. Samson left behind him his own tribe, his own community, in his own backyard. A tribe that was right, for a God right.

There's those tragic words at the end of chapter 18. The children of Dan set up the graven image in Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh. This is the Levite in the story.

He and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan all the day of the captivity of the land. And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he had made all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh. I can't take the time to paint the background of the religious picture.

The ark is neglected. It's 20 years in Kirjath-Jerim. The tabernacle is in Shiloh, a heartless religion.

The ark is gone, neglected. A false priesthood set up, graven images set up. And all the while the house of God was in Shiloh, even in its neglected condition over here in the tribe of Dan, there is an alternative form of worship set up by men from Samson's backyard.

Can we blame Samson entirely for all those things? No, I don't think we can. But that's the legacy that he left behind. That's where his own tribe, his own community is as he fades from the scene.

Under the heel of her enemy, not possessing what God had promised them, and influenced by God, embracing it, ready to fight to defend their idols. Now let me ask you today, and here's where I'm done. What will your legacy be? What will you leave behind? Let me remind you of something.

Samson made it to Hebrews 11, and this is what he left behind. I ask myself, what legacy can I leave? Please, God, it will not be one of indulging the flesh, of encouraging idolatry, encouraging false religion, because you see, that's where the indulgence of the flesh and carnality leads through. That is idolatry in the heart, and it just developed until it took over his tribe.

Don't leave that legacy. Before God, let me plead with you, do not leave that behind. And the young ones that are here, you have a life in which you may serve God.

In God's name, as old Dwingley said, I think it was Dwingley, in God's name do something great. Don't follow the course that Samson followed. Oh yes, seek for his power.

Seek for his power, but deny your sin. Amen.

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