

(Through the Bible) Judges 15-16

by Chuck Smith

Samson's strength lay in his lifelong commitment to God as a Nazirite, but he was betrayed by Delilah and lost his strength.

Duration: 54:29

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 3:23

Topics: "Sin And Consequences", "Gods Mercy"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Samson from the Bible and the consequences of giving in to unbridled lust and living in sin. He describes how this lifestyle blinds individuals to the truths and realities of God and binds them with its power. The speaker emphasizes that initially, sin may seem exciting and thrilling, but it eventually becomes a grind, causing individuals to hate themselves and what they are doing. However, the speaker also highlights the message of hope in the story of Samson, as his hair begins to grow again, symbolizing God's grace and mercy towards those who turn back to Him after failing Him.

Transcript

Tonight shall we turn to Judges, the 15th chapter and we pick up on the story of Samson here in chapter 15. The story of Samson begins in the 13th chapter of the book of Judges with the announcement to his parents of his birth and then the birth of Samson. In chapter 14 Samson assumes a position as a judge in Israel, which position he occupied for 20 years.

His falling in love with a Philistine girl in Timnath is told and the resultant disaster. As he made a riddle to the 30 young men that were appointed for his companions prior to the marriage.

And he put out the riddle to them that related to his experience with a lion for on his way to Timnath a lion jumped him, he ripped the thing in two like it was just a little goat, tossed the carcass over into the bushes and a few weeks later on his return trip to Timnath, walking down he went into the bushes to see the progress of the decomposition of the lion's carcass and he discovered that bees had made a hive in the carcass there was honey there and so the honey was good he ate of it and so to these 30 fellows that were appointed as his sort of buddies during the last week of bachelorhood he gave them a riddle with sort of a bet kind of a thing that if they could tell the riddle he would give them 30 suits and 30 shirts if they could not tell him the riddle then they'd have to give

him 30 changes of garments plus 30 shirts and so they said what's the riddle they took him on and he said out of the eater came forth sweetness and so they worked on it and worked on it for two or three days they couldn't come to an answer they came to his bride-to-be and said look you've set us up for this thing and we don't like it you're trying to rip us off that's why you called us to be this guy's companion and now he has set up this riddle it's a big setup we recognize it and you better find out what the answer to that riddle is or we're going to come and we're going to burn you and your dad's house with fire we're going to burn you down so she came to samson and she said samson here we're going to get married in a few days and you don't really love me he said what do you mean i

don't love you and she said you haven't told me the riddle and he said what do you mean i haven't told you i haven't even told my parents the riddle well you really love me is your you know we should never hide anything from each other there should be no secrets in marriage samson and what is it you know and she began to cry and be miserable and so he finally said hey there's nothing to it a lion jumped me and and out of his carcass the bees made a hive and there was honey that came out of the lion's carcass so the day of the wedding came and uh so the fellow said to samson hey what's stronger than a lion and what's sweeter than honey and samson knew that you know his bride-to-be had told that he made him mad and he said if you hadn't been plowing with my heifer you'd have never found out

and he went down to ashkelon another city the philistines grabbed 30 philistines cracked their skulls and took their clothes and came back and paid off his debt and then took off for ash to all his home he was he was just mad he was really hot and just took off didn't consummate the marriage so that brings us up now to the 15th chapter where our lesson begins tonight so it came to pass within a while after he cooled off that samson came down to visit his wife with a little goat so that they could have some shish kebab and so he said i will go into my wife into the chamber the bedroom but her father would not allow him to go in and her father said i thought that you were just you know completely through with her i thought you were so angry you were never coming back so i let her marry the

best man now look her younger sister is really prettier than she is anyhow why don't you take the younger sister he'd already of course paid the dowry and everything else and and so he said you know her beautiful young sister why don't you take her but samson was sort of a hothead he didn't appreciate the fact that his father-in-law had given his bride away and so he decided to get even with the philistines because they were the ones that sort of you know set the whole thing up anyhow getting the secret out of his bride and they ruined this whole escapade and so he went out and caught 300 jackals or foxes and he tied them tail to tail or just tied their tails together two by two and then he lit a torch and tied it to the tails of these jackals and turned them loose in the wheat fields

that were ready for harvest now you can imagine that brown grass wheat fields and you can imagine the panic of the jackals if you've ever seen a dog with a tin can on its tail you can imagine the panic of the jackals with these torches on their tails running through helter-skelter through the wheat fields that are ripe for harvest golden brown just absolutely wiped out the harvest wiped out the wheat fields set them all on fire they had a real prairie fire down in the area there timnath and so the philistines said who did this someone said it was samson so they came to get him and uh he he wiped them all out so he went back to a rock near etem and there he just went up and and lay back on this rock well the philistines got together an army and they came down against judah and the men of

judah said to the philistines hey what's the big idea coming down here with your armed forces we don't want to fight we're your servants you've conquered us we we don't want any trouble what's your problem

and they said look we're not really interested in fighting you guys if you'll just turn samson over to us that's all we want we want to get that guy so they came up to this rock where samson was just sort of kicking back and they said to samson hey you know you're causing us a lot of trouble man you know that we serve the philistines and now you've gotten them all upset with us and they're down here with their army and they're threatening us what are you doing to us and and they said we want to turn you over to them we want to bind you and turn you over to them samson said if you will

promise me that you won't turn on me yourselves then i'll let you bind me to turn me over to them they said hey we don't want to kill you we don't have anything against you they're the ones that have the grief against you so they bound him with new ropes and they turned him over to the philistines and as the philistines came upon him god's spirit also came upon him and those ropes by which he was bound he snapped them off he saw lying there a jawbone of a donkey he picked it up and with the jawbone of a donkey he began to smite the philistines tossing their bodies into piles until he had slain a thousand of them the rest evidently fled back home and he looked around and he said heaps upon heaps talking about the heaps of bodies i killed a thousand philistines with a jawbone of a donkey

well then samson became extremely thirsty after this exercise and of course it was the month of june or so the time of the wheat harvest so it is very hot and very dry over there about that time of the year and samson actually thought he was going to die of thirst and he said god you know you've given me this tremendous victory over the over the philistines and now you're going to kill me with thirst and so the lord caused a thing to cleave in the jawbone of the donkey and there was water in and he drank it and his soul was revived and so we come he calls the name of the place first of all ramath lehi which is the hill of the jawbone then when he got a drink out of it he changed the name to hakor which is the well of him that cried and he judged israel in the time of the philistines for

20 years now that was his first encounter with the philistines the first problem that he faced with them and the problem evolved out of his own going down to the city of the philistines going into the camp of the enemy he exposed himself to needless kind of desires and lusts the philistines were a very immoral people very loose in their morals legalized prostitution and everything else was going on among the philistines from a fleshly standpoint it was an exciting place to go because of the looseness of the morals that's probably what drew him there there in the camp of the enemy looking for some excitement which he found more than what he was expecting now his second encounter going down again to the philistines and this time to the city of gaza which is on the south coast of the

territory of the philistines south from ashdod and ashkelon and the purpose of going to gaza was actually to go in unto a prostitute and the people in gaza the men were told that samson was there in town so they circled him and they set an ambush for him and they locked the gates of the city and they said we'll wait until morning and when he goes to leave town we'll pounce on him and we'll kill him samson stayed with this gal until midnight and decided to go home and coming to the gates of the city he found them locked and barred so he picked up the doors of the gate of the city with the two posts and he went away with them bars and all put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of a hill that is before hebron now hebron's about 25 miles from gaza so he carried these gates all

the way to hebron or to a hill before hebron 20 miles away tossed them over and of course in the morning the men from gaza had to send out a regiment to get their gates back and again going into the territory of the enemy setting himself up you can play with fire but ultimately you're going to get burned sometimes when a person is successful in sense in playing around with his passions he thinks that he can master the

situations he thinks he's getting by with it but ultimately it's going to catch you and thus it came to pass that he loved a woman in the valley of sorak whose name was delilah and the lords of the philistines came to her and she they said unto her entice him find out where his great strength lies and by what means we might prevail against him and we will give thee every one

of us 1100 pieces of silver so they all of them offered this enormous bribe to her if she would discover the secret of this fellow's strength so delilah said plain out to him hey tell me what is the secret where is it that your great strength lies samson said well if they would bind me with green vines that have never been dried then i would be weak just like any other man so she began to you know run her fingers through his hair that kind of stuff and pretty soon he fell off to sleep and she commanded the philistines to come in with green vines never dried and they bound him up and she said samson the philistines are upon you and he jumped up and these things snapped off like they were threads that were burned in a fire and he cracked the skulls of the philistines and she said you lied

to me that isn't really true you weren't weak like other men tell me don't lie to me tell me what is the secret of your strength where does your great strength lie and he said well the mistake people have made is they've never bound me with new ropes now if you would bind me with new ropes then i would be weak just like any other man so again she soothed him off to sleep and ordered the philistines to bind him with these new ropes never been used for any other purpose and then she said samson the philistines be upon thee and he jumped up and these ropes snapped off and again busted their skulls she said oh you lied to me again tell me samson come on i want the truth this time what is the secret of your strength and samson said well if you would braid my hair in seven braids then i'd be

weak just like anybody else now at this point you may be thinking good samson you're not revealing the truth keep her guessing but in reality samson is guilty of a compromise which is always dangerous when she said what is the secret of your strength he should have flat out said it's none of your business i'll never tell but he's playing games thinking that he is clever but notice he's getting closer to the truth he's wearing down he's talking now about his hair there are times when people have made a special commitment of their life to god maybe as a retreat maybe just at a time where god has really spoken to their heart and they've responded and they've made their determination i'm going to really live my life now for god and the phone rings and it's one of their friends and they say

come on over tonight we're going to have a party someone's got a keg you know and we're going to have a good time now this is the life you said hey i'm not going to do that anymore i know that that life is the life of folly i'm not going to enter that anymore and and i'm going to live for christ and you've made that commitment within your heart but now here's the invitation and you say oh thanks i i really appreciate you calling me but i don't feel so good tonight i think i'm going to go to bed early and they say oh that's too bad we're going to really have a blast you know and you think wow all right chalk one up for victory you know i didn't go but wait a minute you weren't totally honest either and what you have actually done is left the door open for another invitation now if when

they called and said hey come on over tonight we got a cave we're gonna have a great time you know if you had said i appreciate your calling but i have committed my life to jesus christ and i'm not going to be doing any of that stuff anymore i'm going to just be living for the lord because that's the only way to live man the time of the end is close and i'm just going to really get it on for the lord no no no more of that stuff for me they'd never call you again you see now you're being honest you're being true you're closing the door which we need to do on evil we need to close the door on evil we're not always doing that a lot of

times we're leaving the door open little excuses so that the door is still open this was samson's problem he was leaving the door open but he is weakening he's

breaking down and so again she caused him to go to sleep and she braided his hair into seven locks and for good measure they took spikes and pinned them to the planks of the floor and then she said samson the philistines are upon you and he jumped up and pulled the planks of the floor up with him and went out and took care of them now women know when everything else fails try the tear route and so delilah began to turn on the tears you've been deceiving me you don't really love me you've just been playing games with me you don't really love me you know you're just making a fool out of me tell me samson and she began to press him daily making it miserable for him and so finally samson said look all my life i've been a nazirite unto god there it is that was the secret of his strength the

word nazirite is separated all of my life i've been separated unto god the strength of samson lay in his commitment of his life to god which was done really before his birth for before samson was ever born the angel of the lord and announcing to his mother the fact that she was to have a son told her never to bring a razor to his head never to allow him to have anything from the vine wine or whatever because he was to be a nazirite from his birth unto god separated unto god from his birth now in numbers the sixth chapter you have the law for the nazirite there were many times when a person wanted to have a special dedication of his life to god for a period of time it's more or less as the traditional lent period today where people you know make sort of a commitment prior to easter and and

and sacrifice or give up something for the lent period well the in israel they they did the same kind of a thing in in a period and usually before their feast days the the holy days of their feast they would they would take a vow and separate their lives unto god and according to the sixth chapter of numbers if you wanted to separate your life and take the vows of a nazirite you were to bring no razor to your head and you were not to drink any wine any vinegar uh made from grapes any uh strong drink coming from grapes you were not to drink any nectar or grape juice nor were you to eat any grapes themselves nor raisins nor anything that came from the grape vine now the reason for that i don't know but it was just a a kind of a self-denial uh raisins were one of the the real delicacies in

those days they did not have canning processes or uh freezing of food and all in those days so in the summertime they would dry their fruits and all winter long they would eat dried fruits or uh you know they can take and cook up the dried apricots with some water and they have apricots but they they did not have any canning processes so the preserving process was always that of drying the fruit so raisins were really a delicacy it's something they it was a it was something that they always had and enjoyed and so it's sort of a denial in order to make this consecration unto god for a period of time and then when you came to the end of the of that time that you've set for your consecration then you shave all of your hair and you bring it and offer it as a burnt offering unto god it was

just a sacrifice thing and you'd you know it was just the sacrifice in numbers the sixth chapter tells of the vows of the nazirite now his was not to be a separation for a period of time it was to be a lifelong commitment and separation of his life to god a lifelong type of a consecration or commitment and that was the secret of his strength i have been a nazirite unto god i've been separated unto god and there in his great strength did lie that separation unto god or that nazirite vow was indicated by his hair having never been cut and so he tells her i've been a nazirite unto god there's never been a razor come to my head if i would break that vow if i would shave my head the vow would be broken it would be over then i would be just like any other man he told her all that was in his

heart he laid his heart open before and it said that delilah knew that this time he actually laid his heart open he told her the truth and so she went out to the philistines and said we've got him and so they all gathered together and again she relaxed him so he could go to sleep you think oh that poor stupid oaf you'd think that the guy would know better you know after all she's done everything he said so far he said tie me with new green vines tie me with new ropes braid my hair and she's done the whole thing he ought to know that she's going to do it you'd think that he'd get out of there paul said to timothy to flee youthful lust which damn men's souls in perdition but samson sort of bolstered by the victories of the past having become self-confident over the past power went to sleep

now you hear so often that delilah cut off his hair no she didn't she called a barber and while he was sleeping there on her lap the barber shaved his head and so she woke him up she said samson the philistines are upon you and he jumped up and he said i'll shake myself as times before and he knew not that the lord had departed from him as we move on in the old testament we're going to come to an interesting king by the name of asa who at the beginning of his reign was facing a huge invading army of ethiopians and nubians and he called upon the lord and the lord delivered them into the hand of israel and as he was coming back from victory over this huge army the prophet of god came out to asa and said the lord is with you while you'll be with him but if you forsake him he will forsake you

the lord was with samson as long as he kept that vow even though he wasn't always doing the right thing even though there was tremendous weakness in his own moral character even though he was guilty of doing foolish things yet the lord didn't desert him until he deserted the lord until the vow was broken but at this point he had strayed so far that he didn't even know that the lord had departed from him now there is a spiritual kind of a blindness that afflicts people especially if you are fooling around in the enemy's territory trying to play around with sin playing games on the enemy's field it is possible for you to stray from god and to get out more or less isolated and away from god so caught up in your activities that you're not really aware of the fact that that anointing that

power of god is no longer upon your life now there are many people who assume because the anointing of god is still upon their life that god must be pleased with all that they are doing that is a wrong conclusion god does not immediately lift his anointing from a person's life because they have failed or they have fallen i've heard so many people use the rationale but god still uses us and and thus they they take the fact that god is still using them as the as a sort of a god is approving what we are doing if god wasn't approving what we were doing then he would take his anointing and take his power from our lives that isn't always true it's a wrong rationale the gifts and calling of god are without repentance but if you continue in that path you're going to get one day to the place where

god's spirit is removed from your life you won't know it maybe for a time you'll still be going on in the same old thing but you'll not be seeing the effects and the results anymore he was blind to his own spiritual state it is possible to be self-deceived about your own spiritual state if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves the truth isn't in us and there are a lot of self-deluded people as regarding to their own spiritual condition samson was blind to the truth about his own spiritual condition he knew not that the lord had departed from him but because the lord had departed from him he was weak just like any other man and this man who at one time had slain a thousand of the philistines with the unlikely weapon of a jawbone of a donkey is now held down by just a few of them as

one brings a stick and gouges out his eyes while others grab him and bind him with chains of brass and they lead him off to gezer to put him in the prison where he is now grinding in those days they had their

mills with the giant millstones some of them weighing several hundred pounds and they would take these stones and lay them and carve into the stones little grooves around in a circle and they would have a stone in the center of the circle with a hole that they had made in the top that would pivot around and around and then they would have this giant round millstone that rolled around in this groove all the way around and a post going through it and they would take an ox as a rule or a donkey and they would harness it to this post so that the ox or donkey would just continue

walking round and round in the circle as it would pull this millstone around and the ladies would come and pour out their corn or their wheat or their barley into the little groove and as the millstone would roll over it it would grind their wheat into flour and this was usually the work of an ox or a donkey pushing this pole around to push the millstone around to grind the flour.

It now became the occupation of Samson. In my lifetime I've had some very boring jobs. One summer on the Irvine ranch I piled beans.

You ever piled beans all day? It has to be one of the most boring jobs in the world. You just walk up this row of beans and you know you take your pitchfork and just go along and then you make a pile and you know you just go and it is boring and you wait for lunch time but lunch is so far coming and then you'll wait for evening so you can get off work. I pick tomatoes for T-Winkle over here in Costa Mesa on the Bluffs when the whole area of Dover Shores used to be tomato fields and picking tomatoes is a boring job.

You know you get a bunch of guys out there and of course you end up usually in tomato fights and time goes a little faster but it is just a boring job. There's no challenge to it. Days seem like months.

Can you imagine how boring it would be if all day long you were just pushing this pole around in a circle? That would have to be a miserable life. No longer can you even see. You're now forced totally within yourself and you have really nothing to look forward to.

This was the condition of Samson and so they put out his eyes. They bound him with fetters of brass and he did grind in the prison house. I would like to suggest that this is perhaps one of the most colorful pictures of the effect of giving yourselves over to unbridled lust, living in sin.

Its ultimate effect upon you is blinding you to the truths of God, to the realities of God. Secondly, its effect is binding you by its power. You find yourself in the situation no longer able to get out.

You're bound. You began it as a lark. You began it as an excitement.

You began it for thrills, for kicks, but in time it got its hold upon you and now you continue to do it though the kicks are no longer there, but you can't get rid of it. You can't quit it. You find yourself bound by the power of sin and then it becomes a grind.

You begin to hate yourself. You begin to hate what you're doing. But you have no way out.

You can't escape from it and you get into that grind and your life becomes miserable. Your life becomes hopeless. You see no sense of trying to go on and you're living in misery as it's beginning now to grind away.

So Samson, an apt picture of the effects of sin, unbridled lust in a person's life. How be it? The scripture tells us the hair of his head began to grow again after they had shaved him. Therein I see the marvelous

grace of God.

Samson had blown it. He had the potentials of greatness. He had the potential of delivering God's people out of the hands of their enemies.

Samson had the potential of going down in the history book as one of the mightiest and most glorious of all of the deliverers of Israel. His name could have been alongside of David's and Samuel's. He's a marvelous deliverer of Israel but he could not conquer his own passions, his own lust.

And thus there he is, blinded, bound, grinding. How be it? The hair of his head began to grow again. Therein is the gospel because all of us have sinned.

All of us have come short of the glory of God. All of us have failed God. All of us have found ourselves trapped, thinking that there's no way out.

But God is gracious and even though we have failed Him, He will not fail us. And even though we have forsaken Him, if we will just turn back unto Him, He will be merciful and gracious. On a boring job, there's plenty of time to think.

And I imagine that Samson did a lot of thinking as he was pushing that post around. Thinking of what a fool he had been. Going back and reliving the mistakes and thinking, if I'd only done this, if I'd only done that, if I'd only stayed out of Sorek, if I'd only walked away from Delilah, if I'd only, if I'd only, and living in those reflections of the past.

A man, once mighty and powerful, now shuffling with uncertain gait because he can't even see where he's going anymore. Brought down to the bottom. But many times God has to bring us to the bottom so we'll look up.

And he began to look up. And I'm certain that as his hair began to grow again, he felt within his heart, God, I'm going to renew my consecration. I'm going to renew my vow.

But God, what can you do with me now? Lord, what I have and what's left here is yours. I'm going to give my life to you such as it is. Never can he achieve or attain what he could have, the full potential of his being.

But Lord, at least you can have what's left. The broken shell. And so the Philistines were having a huge gala party.

They had gathered in the temple of their God, the God Dagon. People were on the roof, crowded around the place. Someone got the brilliant idea, let's bring that guy Samson.

They used to give us such a bad time. Bring him into the arena so we can see him shuffling around in his blinded condition. Let him stumble around, trip him and all.

And just so we can have a big laugh at the clumsiness of him now that he cannot see. And so they hurried down to the prison. And they brought Samson from the prison into the temple.

And as he came in, the laughs and the hurrahs went up as the people began to mock him and to jeer him, to make fun of him. As he tried to make his way around the room in a strange place, not able to see. One would put his foot out in front of Samson and Samson would trip and fall.

And everybody would roar and howl with laughter. And after that man who was such a nemesis is now so weakened and it delighted them. And Samson said, Oh God, once more, just once more God, all I ask is once more.

Let the anointing of your spirit come upon my life. David, the psalmist messing around also lost that sense of God's spirit. After his sin with Bathsheba and after the death of his child, David repented and his repentance is given to us in the 51st Psalm.

And one of the pertinent prayers of David in the 51st Psalm when he is asking God to cleanse him and according to God's mercy blot out his transgression. One of the pertinent verses there he said, and return thy Holy Spirit unto me. Oh God, again, let me sense your presence.

Let me again sense your power. This was Samson's prayer. Lord, once more I want to know your power on my life.

Lord, I don't want to live. I have nothing to live for now. Let me die with the Philistines.

His prayer unto God. He said to the young boy that was leading him around, take me over to the pillars that hold this place up. And the little boy innocently led him over to the pillars that held up the temple.

And he took hold in his right arm and left arm, the two key pillars holding up the building. He said, God, I want the Philistines to be avenged for the eyes that they put out. And by faith, he began to pull and the Spirit of God came upon Samson.

And he pulled those pillars together. The temple of the God Dagon fell with the Philistines packed into it. And 3000 of them were crushed to death.

And Samson lay dead under the crushed Philistines. God's grace allowed him to once more experience the power of God. And he went out in the greatest victory of his life.

Jesus in the New Testament said something that was very interesting in regards to his disciples. He said, ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its savor, it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under the foot of man.

Samson probably is a good illustration of this sort of allegory of Jesus. For God had chosen Samson to be the saving salt of Israel. But because of the weakness of his flesh, he lost his savor.

And he ended up crushed neath the Philistines. The sad story of Samson is being repeated, however, over and over as we see men with wasted potentials. God has endowed people with talents, abilities, and they waste them because of the weaknesses of their own flesh.

They never achieve, they never attain that full glory and power that God wants their lives to be. Wasted potential is the story of so many people. The tragic biography.

Wasted. His life was wasted. He could have done so much for God.

He could have been such a power for God's kingdom. He could have been so influential in bringing others to the Lord, but his life was wasted. He was destroyed by the weakness of his own flesh.

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