

Judges 16:16-31

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August 16, 2026

Lesson: Compromise

The lesson today is on Samson. The commentary in my Bible said that Samson was one of the most conflicted people in the Bible. He was blessed by God from birth, and filled with the Holy Spirit, but he spent his life tempting himself with sin, until it finally destroyed him.

In the old testament people often ascribed misfortune to a person's sin.

Achan: In Joshua 7, we read about Achan, who took spoils from Jericho and buried them under his tent. He and his whole household were stoned and burned.

King Saul: Saul disobeyed God, and the Lord finally rejected him as king.

David: David's adultery and his murder of Uriah cost him his son, perpetual violence within his household and Absalom's rebellion.

Job: Job is one of the most obvious examples where people looked at the circumstances of his life and decided that surely, he must have been guilty of great sin. Job was innocent, but people believed so much that when something bad happened to a person, that there had to be sin causing it.

Q: Do we believe the same way?

If we see a child with cancer, do we think the parents are being punished for some sin?

When a person loses their job, or falls on hard times, do people whisper that God is judging them?

We don't see the world quite the same way today do we?

Q: I wonder why we don't?

<Pause for responses>

I think it could be because we've come to realize that everyone really is guilty of sin, and that to God, sin is sin, and He won't come near a person guilty of small sins any more than a person guilty of big ones.

But we do still believe in cause and effect, don't we?

If I drop a light bulb from the church window, we expect it will shatter. It might not, but we'd be surprised if it didn't. Cause and effect is really the only way we can understand time.

If I took pictures of the light bulb falling, hitting the ground, and pieces of it laying on the ground, we could put them in order because we understand cause and effect. We know the light bulb didn't start out in pieces and jump up into the air to come back together. We could put those photos in order easily because God made one state naturally follow another.

So, even when we don't expect to be killed by an accident or a disease, or for our loved ones to suffer because of our sin, there is still a cause and effect. It might not be as clear as it was in the Bible today, but there is always a penalty for sin.

That's what we'll consider as we go through today's lesson together.

Judges 16:16-20 (KJV)

16 And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death;

17 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.

18 And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

19 And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

20 And 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 not that the LORD was departed from him.

A brief summary of Samson's achievements

- Judges 14:5-6: Killed a lion with his bare hands.
- Judges 14:19: Killed 30 Philistines in Ashkelon.
- Judges 15:4-5: Burned the Philistines' grain fields, vineyards and olives with 300 foxes and torches.
- Judges 15:8: Struck the Philistines "hip and thigh with a great slaughter".
- Judges 15:15-16: Killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey.
- Judges 16:3: Tore the gates of Gaza from their posts and carried them to the top of a hill.
- Judges 16:29-30: Pulled down the temple of Dagon, killing more Philistines in his death than in his life.

Several things contributed to Samson's downfall.

- He became over-confident in himself rather than God.
- He tempted himself by veering into battles and affairs with his enemies.

The Angel of the Lord told Samson's mother that he was to live under a Nazirite vow, which included:

1. Abstinence from grapes and wine.
2. No cutting of his hair
3. Avoidance of all dead bodies

Samson killed a lion, ripping it apart with his bare hands like a man might tear a goat apart. He went on his way to the Philistine camp and brought back the woman that "looked good to him". When he passed by the lion's carcass, he saw that bees had built a nest within it. Samson cut the honeycombs out of the lion's carcass and ate the honey. When he returned to the camp of his family, he gave them some of the honey to eat, but he told no one where he got the honey.

Later, he challenged thirty men from another camp who came to celebrate his wedding to a riddle.

"Out of the eater came
something to eat.
And out of the strong, came
something sweet."

The men could not guess Samson's riddle, so after three days, in desperation, they asked his new wife to find out the answer. She cried until Samson gave in and told her the answer. The next day when they guessed the riddle's answer, Samson knew that she'd betrayed him. He went down and killed thirty men from the other camp.

Samson teased with sin many times, both in his battles with the Philistines and his affairs with their women. People today would call this "tempting fate". We are uncomfortable with that saying, because we would prefer someone calling this "tempting God", but you could read it in a way that indicates he was tempting his ultimate fate, meaning his outcome. Either way, it would have the same result. Ultimately, when you come close to a precipice – the edge of a cliff, too many times, you eventually go over. It's cause and effect again.

Samson teased with Delilah too, many times, and he had plenty of chances to see that she was trying trick him into revealing his weakness.

Delilah was a spy for the Philistines, and from the start she set out to find his weakness. Samson believed he was too smart for his enemies, but each time, they continued until they solved his riddles, either the riddle of the honey from the lion's carcass, or his ultimate deception by Delilah.

We suffer from this too, don't we?

We tempt ourselves with sin, believing that God doesn't punish us for it. We believe it because most of the time the cause is separated from the effect by a lot of time, and in that time we think that, well, we either got away with that sin, or maybe God didn't really consider what we did a sin after all.

But even if we don't die, or get cancer, or lose our job because of our sin – there is still an effect isn't there?

We still lose something when we sin. We lose our closeness with God. We lose our focus on Him, worshipping Him, talking to Him, learning about Him. That is the effect that has always happened, and that continues today. When we sin, the space between us and

God grows wider. When we continue sinning, it gets so wide that the connection between us gets so weak that we cannot even feel it any longer.

Samson's focus became more on himself, and his war on the Philistines through battle and conquest of their women, than on God, and without God, Samson was just like every other man.

So Delilah tried to trick him many times, by crying, and pleading and coaxing him to trust her with his secret.

He told her "If they bind me with seven fresh cords that have not been dried, I will become weak, and be like any other man."

Delilah had him bound and yelled for his attackers to spring out, "The Philistines are upon you Samson!"

She pleaded again, and he told her, "If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I will become weak, and be like any other man."

Delilah had him bound and yelled for his attackers to spring out, "The Philistines are upon you Samson!"

She pleaded again, and he told her, "If you weave seven locks of my hair like a web, and fasten them with a pin, then...and we know the rest."

Delilah weaves and pins his hair and again, tries to spring the trap. Samson makes quick work of his enemies.

Samson circles round and round, getting closer to the edge of the cliff, believing that he is smarter and stronger than his enemies.

But this time, he's come too close. He gives away his true weakness. Why does he do it? How does he think that it could end any other way than it ultimately ends? Without his vow, he's just a man, he's almost said as much several times before. But the problem is that he's not smart enough to avoid the circumstance that he has set up for himself – it was God that performed all the miracles that Samson credited to himself. Without God, Samson was nothing – just ordinary. Just like you are ordinary. Just like I am ordinary.

Without God, we are not smart, we are not strong, we are not anything beyond the millions of people that have lived and died before us.

Samson lost his focus on God, and he couldn't see that he was getting closer and closer to the edge.

And now we see that Samson was not avoiding the cause and effect. He was not avoiding results of his sin, they were storing up and waiting for him.

Judges 16:21-25 (KJV)

21 But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

22 Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

23 Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for 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.

24 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.

25 And 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.

The Lord does not tolerate worship of other gods. These gods and principalities interfere with His Holy plan for man, and they are an abomination. Dagon is supposed to be part fish and part man, which I guess makes him like a Merman. Dagon shows up several times in the Bible.

In 1 Samuel 5: 2-5, the Philistines took the Ark of God and put it into the house of Dagon. When we think of how people were struck dead just by touching the Ark, it is impossible to imagine how great God's fury would be over this.

The next morning, they came into the house of Dagon and saw the statue of Dagon had fallen on its face. It makes you smile to imagine how they would have reacted to that. They probably scurried around trying to set their god's statue back upright.

The next night the statue fell again and this time, the statue's head and hands broke off, and the statue was left as just a stump. It's a joy to see what happens to God's enemies isn't it?

So, we know that God despised Dagon's worship.

Because of his pride and over-confidence in himself, the Philistines outwitted Samson, but God would never allow them to stand against Him.

Samson was a fighter. He fought the enemies of his people, and God's own enemies. There was good in this obviously, but Samson was more focused on the fight, than on obeying and honoring God. He reveled in the fight and spent more time with the Philistines than with his own people.

Q: Is it possible for us to act in the same way? Do we spend more time talking and worrying over our enemies and God's enemies than we spend worshipping God and enjoying the time with our families?

<Pause for responses.>

I think that's possible. I know that Martha believes that I do this. She believes that I am too focused on the people that are working to bring down our country, even civilization as a whole, than I should. She believes that it causes me to have a more negative focus.

From my own perspective, I feel that someone needs to be on guard, to stand against what is happening, even if it is just commenting online.

Does anyone else feel like you're pulled in two directions like this, the pull of enjoying the life God gave you, and standing alert against God's enemies and the ones who would be against your people?

We see pitiful Samson, who was once so powerful, is now humiliated. His eyes were gouged out or burned out. He's forced to push a giant stone grinder to grind flour in the prison. Dagon was supposed to be the god of the grain crops, so Samson was humbled by working for him.

Judges 16:26-31 (KJV)

26 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.

27 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.

28 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 for my two eyes.

29 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.

30 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.

31 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 Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

Samson's humiliation continued as he had to be led by a boy to stand between the pillars.

We all should understand that although we can believe we are doing the right thing, that we might in fact be doing things that look right in our eyes, but that no longer are really God's will for our lives. We can get caught up in our battles, and we might end up losing everything, and coming to humiliation. We know it is possible to suffer the same fate as Samson.

Q: How do we avoid this?

Prayer: We need to keep a soft heart toward God, even when it seems that a hard heart toward God's enemies is needed. We need to listen carefully to Him, so we know that we're doing His will and not OUR will.

Humility: We must keep a meek and humble spirit, even when we stand against God's enemies. We should never forget that the victories are God's and not ours.

Samson's final victory *was* for the Lord. He's been mocked and humiliated to the point where he was once again asking for God's help. The temple was filled with all the Philistine rulers from five cities. There were three thousand of them in the temple laughing and worshipping Dagon.

The Philistines became too relaxed with Samson. They'd brought him down so far that they no longer feared him at all, so they weren't careful to keep his head shaved, and his hair began to grow back. The commentaries suggest that this was an outward sign of Samson's inward restored heart.

Samson begged God to remember him. Since God is omniscient, we can understand that Samson meant this more in a way of asking God to look upon him once more.

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Samson brought the temple down upon the heads of the enemies of his people and God's own enemies. He'd spent much of his life fascinated with those enemies, spending time in their villages, causing harm to them and looking for their attractive women rather than spending time with his own people.

He was a heroic person, who great feats that no other man could do – but he was the double-minded man like the Bible describes in James 1:8. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

We want to hold onto a single-minded focus on God, through prayer and humility, so that we always behave in a stable way that honors the Lord.