



Judges: The End of Strength, The Beginning of Faith

Lesson 9: March 10th and 11th

Read Judges 16

Sermon Reflection Question: What captured your attention from Sunday's sermon?

Observation & Interpretation:

1. Read Judges 15:20–16:3. How do we see Samson's sin entangle him in a precarious situation?
2. Read Judges 16:4–22. Samson's fall didn't happen overnight; it was a series of compromises. Describe the events that led to Samson's downfall?
3. How do small, "minor" spiritual compromises often pave the way for a major moral collapse?
4. Look at verse 22: "But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved." How does this small detail represent God's "quiet" work of restoration even while we are still facing the consequences of our sin?

Read Judges 16: 23–31.

At last, in verse 28, Samson shows true faith in God. There is a new-found humility. He recognizes Yahweh is sovereign. He acknowledges he depends on God for his strength. And he is prepared to die to perform his God-given role, rather than use his God-given strength to save himself.

5. Compare Samson's attitude in Judges 15:16 (celebrating his own victory) with his prayer in Judges 16:28. What has changed in the way he views the source of his power?

Reflection & Application:

6. In grace, God takes our weaknesses and uses them for us; but in sin, we take even God's gifts and strengths and use them against God. How do these truths about God and about humanity ring true in your own experience, past and present?
7. It was only after Samson was blinded and humiliated that he truly "saw" his need for God. Have you ever experienced a "blinding" season, a trial that stripped away your self-sufficiency, that actually led to a deeper faith?
8. Samson's final prayer is a desperate plea: "Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more." Why does God often wait until we are at the end of our own strength before He displays His greatest power?
9. As we near the final days of Samson's life, what do you learn about the character of God despite Sampson's flaws and circumstances?

Observation & Interpretation:

10. For someone who feels their past "disqualified" them from being used by God, how does Samson's inclusion in the "Hall of Faith" (Hebrews 11:32) change that perspective? What is the difference between worldly regret and true, life-giving repentance?

A Shadow of Jesus

The death of God's judge, to deliver his people, points us to the death of God's Son.

Both Samson and Jesus:

- *were betrayed by someone close to them*
- *were handed over to Gentile oppressors*
- *were tortured and chained*
- *were asked to perform*
- *died with arms outstretched*
- *appeared completely struck down by their enemies (Dagon, and Satan), yet in their death crushed their enemy, breaking their power over God's people.*

There are, though, two crucial differences:

- *Samson was in Dagon's temple as a result of his own repeated disobedience. Jesus was on the cross as a result of his perfect obedience and our repeated disobedience.*
- *Samson's death began deliverance (13 v 5); Jesus' death achieved deliverance "once for all," a final rescue (see 1 Peter 3 v 18; Hebrews 10 v 10).*

Reflection & Application:

11. How does the manner and achievement of Samson's death move you to appreciate and praise the Lord Jesus Christ for his death and resurrection?

Fasting Reflection:

RELAX: Take a moment to relax. Close your eyes and breathe deeply - inhaling slowly, then exhaling slowly. Repeat this several times as you imagine yourself coming into God's presence. As you finish and get ready to read, pray something simple like "Lord, speak to me through the words of your gospel. Amen."

READ. Read this story about Jesus two times. Read slowly, pausing at the line breaks:

Matthew 27:45-54

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

REFLECT. After the reading, take some time to reflect in silence on one or more of the following questions:

- What word or words in this passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage comforted you?
- What in this passage challenged you?
- What is God inviting you into?

RESPOND. Read the scripture passage one more time. Bring to the Lord the praise, petition, questions, or thanksgiving that the Word inspires in you.

REST. Soak in the moment, rest in it, don't rush through it. Do you sense anything that Jesus is inviting you to know, see, believe, or do? Pray: Thank you God for meeting with me in this time. Give me courage and faith to follow you this day.