

Title: 'As We See Fit': A study of the book of Judges- Part 18- "The Strongman's Weakness"

Key text: Judges 16:1-22

Suppl. texts: 1 Cor. 10:12

Introduction: Last time, we noted Samson's frustration as he tried to return for his wife but found her given to another. After declining the offer of another wife, he took his own vengeance against the Philistines & burned their fields at harvest time. In turn, the Philistines burned his former wife & her family. Now enraged, Samson slew an unknown number of them without the assistance of the Lord. Finally, we saw Samson's thirst. He was betrayed by the people of Israel & handed over to the enemy. This time, the Spirit of the Lord empowered Samson to defeat God's enemies & he killed them with an unlikely weapon: the jawbone of a dead donkey. After killing a thousand men, Samson is exhausted & dying of thirst. God graciously provided a miraculous spring that saved his life. Today, we move into the most familiar section of Samson's story, as he meets Delilah, who leads him to his downfall.

Outline: *read Judges 16:1-22.*

1. Strength without discernment

- As we begin chapter 16, we again find Samson where he should not be, doing things he should not be doing. Engaging in the world's oldest profession.
- He's not barely in Philistine territory like before; he's forty miles deep, in Gaza, their most important seaport.
- **Vs. 1;** *"One day Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her."* There were plenty of prostitutes in Israel.
- Perhaps Samson has begun to believe in his own greatness, his own legend.
- He thinks he can go anywhere & do anything without consequence, & no one can stop him. He has little or no discernment.
- Not only is he in the wrong place, but he is obviously doing the wrong thing.
- He is again operating far outside his Nazarite vow by being with a prostitute.
- Perhaps he thought himself justified in having his sexual needs satisfied by other means since his marriage didn't work out & he never consummated the marriage.
- Perhaps this is something even deeper: the unrestrained lust of his eyes has led him to unrestrained actions. He's not just looking & lusting; he's acting on his lust.
- Perhaps Samson thinks he can go anywhere at any time, but he is noticed.
- **Vs. 2;** *"The people of Gaza were told, 'Samson is here!' So they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the city gate. They made no move during the night, saying, 'At dawn we'll kill him.'" They lay in wait all night, ready to capture the enemy. I wonder how many were there, maybe thousands?*

- **Vs. 3:** *"But Samson lay there only until the middle of the night. Then he got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose, bar and all. He lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron."* He's up in the middle of the night.
- Again, no mention of the Spirit of the Lord here, just an **amazing feat** of strength.
- The city gates were protection for the city; he destroyed their safety & security.
- **Quote:** *"Escaping (judgment) is about grace. Anyone living in sin should not fool himself or herself into thinking otherwise."* (place on screen)

2. Strength without **restraint**

- Lest we think Samson has learned his lesson, now enters Delilah.
- **Vs. 4:** *"Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah."* He goes from one woman to another.
- Notice, he 'fell in love', but her feelings are not recorded. There is no **lust** in **love**!
- I have always **assumed** that Delilah was a Philistine.
- Many may wrongly think the bible says she was a prostitute.
- Many may think the unnamed prostitute in vs. 1-3 & Delilah are the same.
- However, the bible says none of those things expressly.
- Delilah is said to be from the Valley of Sorek, which **straddles** the Israeli/Philistine border. We assume she is Philistine because the Philistines use her to undo Samson.
- She could be from the Israeli side or the Philistine side of the border. Another reason to think she is a Philistine is because of Samson's weakness for Philistine women.
- However, her name is a **Hebrew** name which likely means: **delicate** or **weak**.
- Isn't it interesting that a strongman is undone by weakness?
- She does take money as a reward from the Philistines to coax Samson's secret & she uses her **beauty** & likely her **body** to capture Samson. It was a **huge**, promised **sum**.
- So, at least in that way, she prostitutes herself.
- **Vs. 5:** *"The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, 'See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver.'"*

3. Strength without **reliance**

- Next comes a series of attempts by Delilah & a series of deceptions by Samson.
- **Vs. 6:** *"So Delilah said to Samson, 'Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued.'"*
- Lie #1: tie me up with 7 fresh animal sinews or tendons, used for bowstrings.
- Lie #2: new ropes (7?) that have never been used.
- Lie #3: weave the 7 braids of my hair into the fabric of a loom, fastened with a pin.
- Notice, with each lie, he gets closer to the truth. Even mentioning his hair.

- Each time she cries out the same phrase: *"Samson, the Philistines are upon you!"*
- Any man at this point should cut & run. Like Joseph, Samson should've fled a dangerous, entrapping situation. But again, Samson plays with sin & temptation.
- **Vs. 15-16;** *"Then she said to him, 'How can you say, 'I love you,' when you won't confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven't told me the secret of your great strength.' With such nagging, she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death."* Uses his 'love' against him.
- Delilah & the strongman had a three-round fight where Samson won each round.
- **1 Cor. 10:12;** *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you do not fall."*
- However, round four & the **knockout** clearly goes to Delilah.
- **Vs. 17-18;** *"So he told her everything. "No razor has ever been used on my head," he said, "because I have been a Nazirite set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man." When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, "Come back once more; he has told me everything." So the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands."*
- We weren't told what Samson was doing the other three times, but this time he is dead asleep when he needed to be awake. Before, he was awake in the middle of the night & escaped, but now he's comfortably sleeping with the enemy.
- **Vs. 19;** *"Having put him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him."*
- **Quote:** *"If you have fallen from God's law into lusts of any type, such as substance abuse or the many forms of immorality, including adultery, pornography, or homosexuality, it would be wrong for you to think the absence of an immediate consequence means that you have outwitted the world, your family, the church, or the judgment of God. Instead, you have experienced the patient hand of the Lord as He gives you a chance to repent before your sins catch up to you."* (place on screen)
- The **saddest** moment of Samson's story is not his capture, his death, his lust, his toying with his vow, but it's the moment he realized that he had taken God & His Spirit for granted, & God alone made all the difference.
- **Vs. 20;** *"Then she called, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He awoke from his sleep and thought, 'I'll go out as before and shake myself free.' But he did not know that the LORD had left him."* He got up to fight all **alone** & was **overwhelmed**.
- He has fought for his own vengeance, in his own strength, & at times, with the Spirit of the Lord, but unknown to him, his strength is gone. It was all a **grace** from God & that **grace** has **departed**.

- **Vs. 21-22;** *“Then the Philistines seized him, **gouged out his eyes** and took him down to Gaza. **Binding him with bronze shackles**, they set him to **grinding in the prison**. **But the hair on his head began to grow** again after it had been shaved.”*
- For the man whose name means ‘**sunny**’ has the light **permanently** go out. He would live out his final days in **darkness**.
- We’re left to assume at the end of verse 22 that God’s not **finished** with Samson yet.

As We See Fit

A Study of the Book of Judges- Part 17

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1. Strength without _____

- He's _____ miles deep, in Gaza, their most important _____.
- There were _____ of _____ in Israel.
- Perhaps Samson has begun to believe in his own _____, his own _____.
- He thinks he can go _____ & do _____ without _____, & no one can stop him.
- He is again _____ far _____ his Nazarite vow by being with a prostitute.
- Perhaps he thought himself _____ in having his sexual needs satisfied by other means since his marriage didn't work out & he never consummated the marriage.
- Perhaps this is something even _____: the unrestrained _____ of his _____ has led him to unrestrained _____.
- Again, no mention of the Spirit of the Lord here, just an _____ of strength.
- **Quote:** *"Escaping (judgment) is about grace. Anyone living in sin should not fool himself or herself into thinking otherwise."*

2. Strength without _____

- There is no _____ in _____!
- I have always _____ that Delilah was a Philistine.
- Delilah is said to be from the Valley of Sorek, which _____ the Israeli/Philistine border.
- However, her name is a _____ name which likely means: _____ or _____.

- She does take money as a reward from the Philistines to coax Samson's secret & she uses her _____ & likely her _____ to capture Samson.
- It was a _____, promised _____.

3. Strength without _____

- **1 Cor. 10:12;** *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you do not fall."*
- However, round four & the _____ clearly goes to Delilah.
- **Quote:** *"If you have fallen from God's law into lusts of any type, such as substance abuse or the many forms of immorality, including adultery, pornography, or homosexuality, it would be wrong for you to think the absence of an immediate consequence means that you have outwitted the world, your family, the church, or the judgment of God. Instead, you have experienced the patient hand of the Lord as He gives you a chance to repent before your sins catch up to you."* (place on screen)
- The _____ moment of Samson's story is not his capture, his death, his lust, his toying with his vow, but it's the moment he realized that he had taken God & His Spirit for granted, & God alone made all the difference.
- He got up to fight all _____ & was _____.
- It was all a _____ from God & that _____ has _____.
- For the man whose name means '_____ ' has the light _____ go out. He would live out his final days in _____.
- We're left to assume at the end of verse 22 that God's not _____ with Samson yet.