

Title: 'As We See Fit': A study of the book of Judges- Part 19- "One More Time"

Key text: Judges 16:23-31

Suppl. texts: 2 Sam. 1:19, Prov. 16:32

Introduction: Last time, we saw Samson's strength in three negative ways: strength without discernment, strength without restraint, & strength without reliance. We first found Samson engaging in the world's oldest profession. He shows no discernment as he goes anywhere he wants and does anything he wants, thinking there will be no consequences. Instead of learning his lesson, he again 'falls in love' with another woman: Delilah. Though not called a prostitute in the bible, she uses her beauty & body to undo the strongman. Finally, we saw a man who didn't rely on the Lord for his strength, taking the Spirit's presence for granted. His Nazarite vow was now fully broken as his hair was removed; his strength was gone, but he didn't know it. Now enslaved & blind, it seemed the end was near. Tonight, we complete Samson's sad story & see that God is not finished with him yet.

Outline: *read Judges 16:23-31.*

1. Samson the prized slave

- We left Samson with his eyes gouged out, his strength gone, & enslaved, grinding at a mill, which was laborious work usually reserved for lowly slaves or animals.
- Samson's downfall should remind us of the blinding, binding, & grinding results of sin. Raised in a godly home, given a godly calling, now just a prized slave.
- With no eyes, he lives in permanent darkness. Sin leads to darkness in our lives. It hardens our hearts & darkens our souls.
- Imagine having to be led, as a slave, everywhere, likely by another slave.
- *"Oh, how the mighty have fallen."* Part of David's lament over the deaths of Saul & Jonathan in **2 Sam. 1:19**; *"Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen."*
- We also left off with Samson's hair regrowing in vs. 22. Samson's strength was not in his hair; it was that his hair symbolized his dedication to the Lord.
- **Vs. 23**; *"Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, 'Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands.'" The Philistines praised their false god for delivering their enemy.*
- Instead of bringing glory to Yahweh, Samson actually brought glory to a false god.
- **Vs. 24**; *"When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, 'Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the one who laid waste our land and multiplied our slain.'" Dagon was the Philistine god of the weather & of grain. Samson had destroyed their grain & harvest. Perhaps they saw this as Dagon's revenge.*

- **Vs. 25a**; *"While they were in high spirits, they shouted, 'Bring out Samson to entertain us.' So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them."*
- The **trophy** of their god was presented at the festival.

2. Samson & the **servant**

- As we said, Samson is blind & reliant upon others to lead him around. While his other senses may be heightened, he has no ability to go anywhere on his own.
- The man who ventured into enemy territory with reckless abandon, who toyed with sin, being in the wrong place at the wrong time, now can't go anywhere on his own.
- Samson now asks for **innocuous** help, or so it seemed.
- **Vs. 25b-26**; *"When they stood him among the pillars, Samson said to the servant who held his hand, 'Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.'"*
- Samson is not appearing only as a trophy of their victory but as a **performer** for the crowd's entertainment.
- He is led out, not guarded by **throngs** of **soldiers**, but by a simple **servant**. Samson is so weak that he poses no threat.
- We aren't told exactly how he was 'made sport of' or how he entertained the crowd.
- It is likely that they **poked** & **prodded** the former strongman, shaming him, much like they did with Jesus at His trial.
- Or possibly asked him to perform feats of strength which he could no longer do.
- Even sadder, perhaps they struck him & dared him to fight back while being blind.
- The point was to **ridicule** & **embarrass** him. The man who carried off city gates, killed a lion with his bare hands, the man who slew a thousand men with only a jawbone, was now nothing more than a shackled slave for their entertainment.
- Samson eventually finds rest leaning against the pillars of the Temple of Dagon.
- While we see this as a huge mistake on the part of the Philistines, at this point, Samson represents no threat to them.
- It's at this moment we understand that Samson has a **plan** but no **power**.

3. Samson & the **Sovereign Lord**

- We've noted how often Samson has taken for granted his power & position with the Lord. He didn't even notice when the Spirit & his strength had left him.
- Not once in Samson's story is a single prayer to the Lord recorded. Not until now!
- **Vs. 27**; *"Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform."*
- The most important people & their families are there for worship. However, they are also there for sport. It was the hottest ticket in town.

- **Vs. 28;** *"Then Samson prayed to the LORD, 'O Sovereign LORD, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.'"*
- Samson's words; he addresses God as Lord God, **Adonai Yahweh**, or **Sovereign Lord**.
- What follows has been called as close to a **deathbed confession** as we have in the bible, as Samson repents & asks for God's favor.
- His words remind me of the cry for help from the thief on the cross. *"Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom!"*
- Perhaps he thought the Lord had totally forgotten him once His Spirit was removed?
- His further request: give me strength one last time. Let it return once again.
- **Was his request a selfish one?** Yes, but it aligns with the will of God, so also, no!
- **Vs. 29-30;** *"Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, 'Let me die with the Philistines!' Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived."*
- The result was the greatest **numerical** victory of Samson's judgeship, though it also cost him his own life.
- **Did Samson commit suicide?** Yes & no! Death while in battle isn't considered suicide; however, he obviously planned his death beforehand. Theologians are divided.
- In one way, he planned his own death & on the other hand, his death was part of God's plan to deliver Israel.
- It's a shame that it took total darkness to turn Samson, the sunny one, towards the true Light of God.
- **How should we view the life & leadership of Samson?** A tragedy? A success? A life wasted? A hero? An antihero? All are true. But let's choose to see it as an example.
- Quote: *"Instead of trying to make a lofty hero out of him, it is far better to recognize frankly the limitations of his character and the imperfections of his religion."*
- His decline began when he sought after the wrong woman, ignoring the advice of his parents. He then took his vow & calling lightly. Soon God warned him, but he broke his vow on multiple occasions. He indulged freely in sins that were forbidden for God's people, much less his Nazarite vow, and it cost him his life. Yet, he had a long reign as judge & began the deliverance of God's people from the oppressor.
- Samuel Smiles, a nineteenth-century author, said this famous quote: *"Sow a thought, & you reap an act. Sow an act, & you reap a habit. Sow a habit, & you reap a character. Sow a character, & you reap a destiny."*
- **Prov. 16:32;** *"Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city."* Oh, that Samson could've lived this out.

As We See Fit

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- With no eyes, he lives in _____ darkness.
- Imagine having to be led, as a slave, everywhere, likely by another slave.
- Samson's strength was not in his hair; it was that his hair _____ his _____ to the Lord.
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- It's at this moment we understand that Samson has a _____ but no _____.

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- What follows has been called as close to a _____ as we have in the bible, as Samson repents & asks for God's favor.

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