

Judges 16C

- The story of Samson is proof that in real life good guys and bad guys simply don't exist
 - Sure, there are heroes and villains to be found in the world
 - But the heroes are never without sin
 - And the even the villains may be put to some good purpose in God's plan
 - The truth is that God is the only One Who is good
 - And sinful men live to serve Him
 - Samson is just such a man
 - Empowered by the Spirit, gifted with great strength, called to free Israel
 - Yet he served himself, squandered his great strength to chase after prostitutes and the daughters of Israel's enemy
 - Nevertheless, he was also a man of faith
 - A man who pictured Christ in many details of his story
- Today we finish his story, which will give us an opportunity to see how the Lord makes something out of Samson's life in the end
 - But not without first making Samson an example in more ways than one
 - Obviously, Samson is an example of all those who fail to live up to their potential in serving the Living God
 - But ironically, Samson's life also a picture of Christ, which we'll see more clearly today
 - How encouraging that the Lord can take even the evil we do and use it to glorify himself
 - The end of Samson's story gives us a unique opportunity to see this principle at work
 - When we last saw him, he was suffering in a prison, blind and miserable

- Now we see how the Lord can turn a repentant heart into an opportunity to glorify Himself

[Judg. 16:22](#) However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it was shaved off.

[Judg. 16:23](#) Now the lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice, for they said,

“Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hands.”

[Judg. 16:24](#) When the people saw him, they praised their god, for they said,

“Our god has given our enemy into our hands,
Even the destroyer of our country,
Who has slain many of us.”

- As we studied last week, Samuel observation about Samson’s hair growing back sends us a powerful signal about Samson’s heart
 - Samson’s had time to think and reflect in prison
 - He’s suffering at the hands of the Philistines
 - But he knows his predicament is the result of his own foolishness
 - Furthermore, he comes to realize that the Lord allowed these circumstances to come to pass to teach him an important lesson
 - And now that he’s learning that lesson, his eyes are opening
 - A spark of light in a darkened heart
 - Meanwhile, as Samson languishes in chains, Israel’s enemies can’t stop bragging over their victory
 - They assemble to give sacrifices and thanks to their chief god, Dagon
 - They credit Dagon with giving Samson into their hands
 - So they sing praises to their god for this victory
 - Ironically, it was supposed to be Israel who gathered before their God and praised Yahweh for Samson in defeating the Philistines
 - By serving himself, Samson made Israel’s enemy stronger
 - Had he served the Lord, the enemy couldn’t have prevailed

- Now instead of Yahweh being praised by Israel, a false god is receiving the praise of the ungodly
- At a point in the celebration, the Philistines decide to parade blind, chained Samson before them
 - Remember previously Samson had moved with impunity within the land of the Philistines
 - If an ordinary Jewish man had ventured about Philistines territory in this way, he wouldn't have lasted very long
 - He would have been killed or made a slave in short order
 - But because Samson had the Spirit's anointing, he never feared the Philistines
 - No one dared attack him because his great strength ensured he could defeat any army single-handedly
 - So for years, Samson has mocked the Philistines by moving freely within their territory
 - Not only did he not commit himself to the mission the Lord gave him, he refused to take his enemy seriously
 - And nothing could have been more foolish
 - Samson was only as invincible as the Lord allowed him to be
 - And since he didn't seek to please the Lord, Samson took great chances when he mocked the enemy he was supposed to be defeating
- Christians walk in Samson's footsteps when we take God's grace for granted by mocking the enemy's power

[1Pet. 5:6](#) Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

[1Pet. 5:7](#) casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

[1Pet. 5:8](#) Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

[1Pet. 5:9](#) But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

[1Pet. 5:10](#) After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

- Peter says the key to living triumphantly in Christ begins with humility
 - Just because you've received the Spirit and become a child of God doesn't mean you can exalt yourself before God's timing
 - This was Samson's mistake; he used his physical strength to make himself someone important and invincible
- Instead, he should have remained humble, cast his anxieties and needs upon the Lord knowing the Lord cared for Samson
 - Nevertheless, we are called to be sober in spirit, which means not to be carried away with fleshly desires or inflated pride
 - Be on alert for the enemy's schemes to trip us up
 - Because that enemy is always working to find our weakness
 - You give him something to work with and he will make the most of it
 - And should happen, we can be sure the Lord has permitted it for our own good
- This is the story of Samson's life
 - He's failed to live in a humble way and instead has treated the enemy as someone to be toyed with
 - As a result, the Lord gave the enemy an opportunity to bring Samson low
 - In a sense, if Samson would not humble himself, the Lord would humble him using his enemies
- So after suffering Samson's mocking for so long, the Philistines relish the opportunity to return the favor

Judg. 16:25 It so happened when they were in high spirits, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may amuse us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he entertained them. And they made him stand between the pillars.

Judg. 16:26 Then Samson said to the boy who was holding his hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them."

Judg. 16:27 Now the house was full of men and women, and all the lords of the Philistines were there. And about 3,000 men and women were on the roof looking on while Samson was amusing them.

- This is a big event for Israel's enemy
 - They haven't just captured the chief adversary, they've conquered a man who represented Israel's God
 - But now they see their god as having shown himself to be more powerful than Israel's God
 - This is a big event, and so we can imagine the room was filled with every dignitary, leader, ruler and prince of the Philistines
 - Anyone who was someone must have attended
 - This temple was the chief temple in the land because it was dedicated to the Philistines' highest god, Dagon
 - This god was the god of grain, the key to life, and he was worshipped throughout the region including in Syria and Babylon
 - There was even a temple dedicated to Dagon in Beth Shan in Israel in Saul's day
 - The temples of the Philistines were constructed in a Greek style, with many columns holding up a covering with an open area in the middle
 - The dignitaries would have been seated under the covering around the open center
 - While the cheap seats would have been on the roof edge looking down into the open area
 - Everyone who could find a way in would have been there to see the mighty Samson on display
- It says Samson enters the room on a leash led by a small boy
 - This scene is proof once again of God's ironic sense of humor
 - Samson was once the one who loved to be the center of parties and gatherings
 - He loved riddles and tricks
 - And now he's on display like a court jester
 - Led around the courtyard like a goat, furthering his humiliation
 - But in the end, Samson will bring the house down

- And the show starts when Samson asks the boy to lead him to the place where the pillars stood
- To stand between the pillars means to be at the front edge of the covering where the dignitaries could get a closer look
- But obviously Samson had other reasons to stand there
- Did you notice the number of people Samuel said were in the temple”
 - Samuel reports that 3,000 people were crammed into this space
 - Besides being a very large number, it’s also a very specific number
 - The number 3 in scripture is God’s calling card
 - This is the number of the triune Godhead, like His signature
- So when we hear that exactly 3,000 people are assembled in this place, we recognize that this moment has been orchestrated by God
 - The Lord brought Samson to this place under these circumstances so Samson could complete the task he was given
 - And now that Samson’s heart has returned to the Lord, then we know Samson will also recognize the Lord’s work
 - And when he does, Samson realizes the Lord has given him another opportunity to fulfill his mission
- In fact, the situation is even better than anything Samson might have imagined
 - Before him is assembled every important person in the land of the Philistines
 - Had Samson gone to battle against the Philistines as the Lord expected, still Samson never could have imagined a better moment than this
 - He now has the chance to eliminate every leader among his enemies in a single moment
 - They’ve been assembled before him as if on a silver platter
 - And Samson recognizes his chance to fulfill his mission despite his lowly circumstances
 - There is only one problem

- Samson has no power
- He has chained, blind and without his strength
- So that leaves only one option

[Judg. 16:28](#) Then Samson called to the Lord and said, “O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.”

[Judg. 16:29](#) Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and braced himself against them, the one with his right hand and the other with his left.

[Judg. 16:30](#) And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he bent with all his might so that the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life.

- After the young boy positioned Samson between two of the pillars holding up the roof, Samson cries out to the Lord
 - For the first time in Samson’s story, he appeals to the Lord for a blessing to accomplish the mission he’s been given
 - He asks the Lord tho grant him strength one last time
 - And this time, he will use that strength to accomplish exactly the mission for which he received that strength in the first place
 - His actions will be an avenging of the loss of his eyes
 - But of course he will also be advancing God’s plan to free Israel from this oppressor
 - With this prayer, Samson reached out with one hand on either pillar and pressed with all his strength so that the pillars tumbled
 - As he pushed, he makes one more request of the Lord
 - He asks that he would die with the Philistines
 - He’s not merely asking for success in defeating the enemy
 - He’s also asking the Lord that he might not have to live out his life blind
 - And as we see, the Lord grants Samson both requests
 - Samson receives strength again for just the moment

- And with it, he succeeds in bringing the roof down killing all the Philistines gathered to mock Samson
- And the Lord grants Samson to die in that moment as well
- Samson's repentance heart led him to accomplish far more in his death than he ever accomplished in his life, as Samuel notes
 - For years Samson lived and ruled as a judge of Israel with supernatural strength, and yet he never killed even 3,000 Philistines
 - Only now in this final moment of his life has Samson reached that number
 - Given his capabilities, we should expect he could have done far more had he set his mind to that task
 - Still, the Lord made the most of Samson's efforts ensuring that the 3,000 he killed were the most important in the land
 - As a result of Samson's actions, the Philistines were greatly weakened
 - And he is recorded in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11
 - Some wonder how a man with Samson's track record could be included in that list of men of faith
 - The answer is to remember the writer's purpose in that chapter
 - The writer of Hebrews is speaking of men and women who exemplified a faith in the word of God
 - And a willingness to seek reward in the Kingdom to come
- And in the last moments of Samson's life, he exemplifies this type of faith
 - Samson pressed on the pillars and expected them to fall
 - Why? He knew the Spirit had departed him and he had no strength
 - He had faith in God's prophetic word concerning his life
 - God told his mother that Samson would begin to free his people from the oppression of the Philistines
 - But to this point in his life that hadn't come to pass

- Samson had faith in the word of God, knowing that what God declares must come to pass
- And therefore, Samson had confidence the Lord would grant his request in this moment
- And the proof of Samson's faith is seen in his attempt to push the pillars down
- The only reason he pushed was because he had faith the Lord would grant his request
- And the only reason Samson had for expecting his request to be granted was the previously spoken word of God
- Samson died a man of faith, broken, brought low but redeemed by faith
 - He asked to die with the Philistines knowing that a Heavenly reward awaited
 - He preferred to die for that reward than to live in the circumstances his sin had produced
- It's ironic, but Samson is probably the judge we can most clearly identify with as believers following the Lord
 - No, we don't possess his special power, but we probably share his confused record of service to the Lord
 - Good days and bad days
 - And a lot more bad days than we care to remember
 - But as we get closer to the end of our lives, we grow more assured in the promises of God
 - And as we consider the Kingdom and our rewards, we concern ourselves more and more with fulfilling our mission
 - In the words of Paul

Phil. 3:13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,

Phil. 3:14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- Speaking of Jesus Christ, the end of Samson's life brings us another picture of our Messiah

- We noted last week that Samson's capture by the Philistines was made possible by 30 pieces of silver paid to Delilah
 - Of course, this compares to the silver paid to Judas to betray Jesus into the hands of the Romans
 - But the scene with Delilah brings additional parallels to Jesus
 - Like Samson, Jesus was tempted three times to give up his power
 - But each time, Jesus resisted that opportunity just as Samson resisted Delilah three times
- But in the fourth attempt by Delilah, Samson gave himself up by confessing the truth concerning the source of his power
 - Likewise, Satan's fourth attempt to defeat Jesus through Judas was successful, but only because Jesus gave himself up
 - As scripture says

John 10:18 "No one has taken it away from Me, but I **lay it down** on My own initiative. I have authority to **lay it down**, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

- Then as Samson is led away by his enemies, he's blind and humiliated
 - Likewise, Luke says as Jesus was led away, He was blindfolded and mocked by the Roman soldiers
 - Mark reports he was bound, just as Samson was in chains
- Finally, Samson was bought out to entertain his oppressors
 - Just as Jesus was led out before the Herod and mocked
 - Later Jesus suffered shame on the cross, Paul says
- Finally, just as Samson entered prison only to leave and bring down a temple so too did Jesus make a similar journey
 - Peter says Jesus entered into a place of prison for departed spirits

[1Pet. 3:18](#) For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;
[1Pet. 3:19](#) in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,

- And when He departed, Jesus set free those who are His

[Eph. 4:8](#) Therefore it says,

“When He ascended on high,
 He led captive a host of captives,
 And He gave gifts to men.”

[Eph. 4:9](#) (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?

- And in that moment, Christ brought down the stone temple and the Law with it

[Heb. 8:13](#) When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

- Next, just as the destruction of the pagan temple required Samson’s death as well
 - So the destruction of the old covenant and law and tabernacle required that Jesus die

[John 2:19](#) Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

[John 2:20](#) The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?”

[John 2:21](#) But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

- Just as Samson was crushed in the temple, scripture says that Jesus was crushed for our iniquity
- Finally, Jesus body was cared for in death by friends who carried Jesus away and buried Him in a tomb
 - Similarly, we read:

[Judg. 16:31](#) Then his brothers and all his father’s household came down, took him, brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. Thus he had judged Israel twenty years.

- Obviously, seeing all these parallels as well as the ones we've seen earlier in our study remind us of the inspired nature of God's word
 - But more to the point today, it reminds us that God can still use you
 - Perhaps you're thinking that your the lessons of Samson have come too late for you
 - You wonder if you've squandered your opportunities to serve and please God?
 - He called you and equipped you, but you wonder if you've set that opportunity aside
 - And now after so long, God can't or won't use you
 - So as you study Samson and his failures you question whether there is any reason for hope in serving God again
 - But friends if that's where your heart is today, then please pay close attention to the end of Samson's story
 - He repented
 - He came to realize the Lord was still calling him
 - And he took a step of faith
 - He prayer for God to use him even yet, and then he put his shoulder to the work
 - And with that small step of faith at the end of a selfish life, Samson accomplished great things
 - And take note of the mercy and grace of our Father
 - Not only did the Lord allow Samson to do a great thing even after so many years of disobedience
 - But the Lord recorded Samson's like here and again in the Hall of Faith
 - And even more than that, the Lord made Samson's life reflect so many details of the Savior
 - Can the Lord not do that for you and me?
 - Don't let the enemy convince you that you're washed up

- Or that the Lord has given up on you
- The Lord is still with you and still calling you
- If you return to Him, great things can still yet happen
- And if you have never strayed, then be renewed in your confidence that as you serve Him, He can accomplish great things through you