

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
4-24-24

Judges 16

Samson and Delilah – Verses 1-3

¹ One day Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her. 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.” 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.

16:1 Saw a harlot there, and went in to her: Samson was in obvious sin here. This is a clear example of how a man so used of God can also sin and sin blatantly. Samson wanted to be used by God, but he also yielded to the deceitfulness of sin. He kept the external features of his Nazirite vow zealously, while at the same time sinning blatantly with a prostitute.

16:1 Samson did what we nearly all do when deceived by sin. He put his life into categories, and figured that some categories God cared about, and some categories God did not care about. Understanding that Jesus has claim over our entire life is a radical change of perspective.

15:3 Put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill: Despite his sin, God still gave Samson supernatural strength to escape from the Philistines. God did this because God’s purpose was bigger than Samson himself, and because God used Samson despite Samson’s sin, not because of it.

Delilah Agrees To Betray Samson – Verses 4-5

⁴ Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. 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.”

16:4 Samson fell in love again and fell for a woman completely wrong for him. This is another example of the pain and ruin that came into Samson’s life because he did not guard his heart.

16:5 The Philistines were ruled by five rulers, not just one. Each ruler had authority over a different city— Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, or Gaza. Each of these cities was an important center for trade and commerce. Given Delilah’s character, it is little wonder that she betrayed Samson when these rich and powerful men paid her a personal visit.

Samson lies to Delilah about the source of his strength – Verses 6-9

⁶ So Delilah said to Samson, “Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued.” ⁷ Samson answered her, “If anyone ties me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, I’ll become as weak as any other man.” ⁸ Then the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she tied him with

them. ⁹With men hidden in the room, she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he snapped the bowstrings as easily as a piece of string snaps when it comes close to a flame. So the secret of his strength was not discovered.

16:6 Please tell me where your great strength lies: The source of Samson’s strength was not obvious. This means that he probably was not a large, heavily muscled man like a modern-day bodybuilder. He may have looked small and skinny, and unlikely to have such strength. And with what you may be bound to afflict you: Delilah knew that Samson was strong; yet she also knew that he could be bound with something, and this was indeed true of Samson. One might say that the honest answer to her question would be, “I may be bound with the attention and affection of an ungodly yet attractive woman.”

16:8 And she bound him: Samson could have easily seen Delilah’s heart by the way she immediately tried to bind him with what he deceptively said he could be bound with. The fact that he did not tell her the truth proved that he knew she had a dangerous intention.

Samson Lies To Delilah About The Source Of His Strength A Second Time – Verses 10-12

¹⁰Then Delilah said to Samson, “You have made a fool of me; you lied to me. Come now, tell me how you can be tied.” ¹¹He said, “If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I’ll become as weak as any other man.” ¹²So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them. Then, with men hidden in the room, she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he snapped the ropes off his arms as if they were threads.

16:10 Now, please tell me what you may be bound with: It would seem that romantic attraction made Samson lose all sense. There was no good or rational reason Samson continued this relationship with Delilah or entertained her prying into the secret of his strength. Samson is a good example of how an ungodly relationship can warp thinking.

16:12 Delilah took new ropes and bound him: Samson allowed this bondage because he refused to escape the situation. Many today are in similar places of sin, compromise, and bondage - and refuse to escape the situation.

Samson Lies To Delilah About The Source Of His Strength For The Third Time – Verses 13-15

¹³Delilah then said to Samson, “All this time you have been making a fool of me and lying to me. Tell me how you can be tied.” He replied, “If you weave the seven braids of my head into the fabric on the loom and tighten it with the pin, I’ll become as weak as any other man.” So while he was sleeping, Delilah took the seven braids of his head, wove them into the fabric ¹⁴and tightened it with the pin. Again she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” He awoke from his sleep and pulled up the pin and the loom, with the fabric. ¹⁵Then 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.”

16:15 Samson was deceived because he wanted to believe Delilah’s lies. Although he could strangle a lion, he could not smother his burning lust and see Delilah for who she really was. How can you keep your desire for love and sexual pleasure from deceiving you? (1) You must decide what kind of a person you will love before passion takes over. Determine whether a person’s character and faith in God are as desirable as his or her physical appearance. (2) Because most of the time you spend with your spouse will not involve sex, your companion’s personality, temperament, and commitment to

solve problems must be as gratifying as his or her kisses. (3) Be patient. Time and observation often reveal what is beneath the pleasant appearance and attentive touch.

Samson finally betrays the source of his strength – Verses 16-19

¹⁶ With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was sick to death of it. ¹⁷ So he told her everything. “No razor has ever been used on my head,” he said, “because I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother’s womb. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.” ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ After putting him to sleep on her lap, she called for someone to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him.^[c] And his strength left him.

16:16-17 Delilah kept asking Samson for the secret of his strength until he finally grew tired of hearing her nagging and gave in. This was the second time that Samson allowed himself to be worn down by constant nagging (14:17). What a pitiful excuse for disobedience. Don’t allow anyone— no matter how attractive, persuasive, or persistent— to talk you into doing wrong.

16:19 Delilah was a deceitful woman with honey on her lips and poison in her heart. Cold and calculating, she toyed with Samson, pretending to love him while looking for personal gain. How could Samson be so foolish? Four times Delilah took advantage of him. If he didn’t realize what was happening after the first or second experience, surely he should have understood the situation by the fourth time! We think Samson is foolish, but how many times do we allow ourselves to be deceived by flattery and give in to temptation and wrong beliefs? Avoid falling prey to deceit by asking God to help you distinguish between deception and truth.

Samson is seized by the Philistines – Verse 20

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.

16:20 I will go out as before: Samson didn’t know things were different. He lived in compromise for so long that he thought it would never make a difference. This is a tragic example of wasted potential and rejection of God’s warnings. Samson thought he could “get away” with sin and escape its consequences. He misinterpreted the merciful delay of God’s judgment or correction as a sign that He really didn’t care. He therefore presumed on God’s mercy and continued on in his sin, making things far worse.

16:20 He did not know that the LORD had departed from him: Samson’s strength was not in his hair, it was in his relationship with God. He worked against that relationship to the point where God finally departed from him, in the sense that He no longer blessed Samson with supernatural strength.

Samson’s Philistine Imprisonment – Verses 21-22

²¹ 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 grain in the prison. ²² But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

16:21 Samson, the mighty warrior, became a slave. Rather than killing him, the Philistines preferred to humiliate him by gouging out his eyes and making him grind grain. Samson now had plenty of time to wonder if Delilah's charms were worth spending the rest of his life in humiliation.

16:21 Although God did not completely abandon Samson (16:28-30), he allowed Samson's decision to stand, and the consequences of his decision followed naturally. We may choose to be close to God or to go our own way, but there are consequences resulting from our choices. Samson didn't choose to be captured, but he chose to be with Delilah, and he could not escape the consequences of his decision.

16:21 Blinded and without strength, Samson was taken to Gaza where he would spend the rest of his short life. Gaza was one of the five capital cities of the Philistines. Known for its many wells, Gaza was a vital stop along a great caravan route that connected Egypt to the south with Aram to the north. The Philistines probably showed off their prize captive, Samson, to many dignitaries passing through. Ironically, it was in Gaza that Samson had earlier demonstrated his great strength by uprooting the city gates (16: 1-3). Now he was an example of weakness.

Samson Is Mocked By His Enemies – Verses 23-25

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." **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." **25** 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. When they stood him among the pillars,

16:23-24 Dagon was the chief god of the Philistines, the god of grain and harvest. Many temples were built to Dagon, and the worship there included human sacrifice. The temples were also the local entertainment centers. Just as people today crowd into theaters, Philistine townspeople crowded into the local temple. They sat on the flat temple roof and looked into the courtyard below. What they often saw was the torture and humiliation of prisoners. Since the Philistines had control over the Israelites, they thought their god was stronger. But when the ark of God was placed before Dagon in a similar temple, the idol fell over and broke into pieces (1 Samuel 5:1-7). God's strength goes beyond numbers or physical might.

Samson's bittersweet death – Verses 26-31

26 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." **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. **28** Then Samson prayed to the LORD, "Sovereign LORD, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes." **29** 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, **30** 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. **31** Then his brothers and his father's whole family went down to get him. They brought him back and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had led Israel twenty years.

16:28-30 In spite of Samson's past, God still answered his prayer and destroyed the pagan temple and worshipers. God still loved him. He was willing to hear Samson's prayer of confession and repentance and use him this final time. One of the effects of sin in our lives is to keep us from feeling like praying. But perfect moral behavior is not a condition for prayer. Don't let guilt feelings over sin keep you from your only means of restoration. No matter how long you have been away from God, he is ready to hear from you and restore you to a right relationship. Every situation can be salvaged if you are willing to turn again to him. If God could still work in Samson's situation, he can certainly make something worthwhile out of yours.