

# Samson: A Life Well Wasted

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[ 0 : 00 ] We are going to be in Judges, the story of Samson.

I won't actually be hitting each and every verse in every chapter, just so we know. We will be kind of skipping through some of the stuff as we go. But I do want to share a story, though. So an old man passes away, and at his funeral, the pastor is telling everything good about his life, the good things he had done, how he was a loving father, he always willing to lend a helping hand.

And while the preacher was doing this, the widow looks over at her children and says to them, would one of you go up there and take a look and make sure that that's your father in the casket? So the story here goes, what is our legacy? What is our life?

If we died today, would we be proud of what the preacher had to say about us? And that's what the story of Samson is going to be about. We're going to look at a life that was well wasted.

A man who couldn't control his anger, who had issues with lying, who couldn't control his appetites.

[ 1 : 19 ] So what we see here in Judges, we're going to give a little bit of background here, is as God goes through Judges, it's kind of like a broken record. You have these 40-year intervals where Israel sends, God intervenes, and raises up a judge to deliver them.

At the beginning of this story, we see that the Israelites are in bondage to the Philistines. And now God's people haven't quite cried out yet, but in preparation for all of this, God does raise up somebody to take the place of that judge, and that's Samson.

So what's interesting about Samson's story to start with is that his parents couldn't conceive, and then they get told by an angel of God that a child would be born to them and that he would take the Nazarite vow.

Now, there are some restrictions and rules that goes to being a Nazarite. One, there's not to eat grapes or wine. You can touch nothing that's dead, right? No dead bodies.

And he can never cut his hair. So he did this so that he could be set apart from the people, that God would have a person that was set apart to do his good work through him.

[ 2 : 33 ] And Samson's endowed with this great power and strength with a purpose to deliver the nation of Israel. But as we see through Samson's life, he doesn't necessarily do a very good job at it.

So he never really lives up to that purpose. He kept secrets. He couldn't control his anger. And he never sought God. But God still uses this man, okay?

And what's interesting is God uses broken people. We look at Abraham and how he lied about his wife being his sister. We look at how Moses, and he killed a man with his bare hands and then was still able to deliver the people of Israel.

So God uses broken people to share his message and to make his purpose happen. Because one, we're all broken. Nobody is perfect.

So in life, we are going to mess up. We are broken people. God's still going to use this for his purpose. And through the story of Samson, we're going to see his life that is well wasted.

[ 3 : 44 ] So the first thing we're going to look at is Judges 14, 5 through 11. Here we see this story of Samson, right? And he's now leading a secret life.

One, he's walking through a vineyard. Two, he never tells anybody about this lion that he destroys. And I think the reason why is because he doesn't want to tell anybody that one, he was walking through a vineyard to begin with, right?

One, if he's a Nazarite, why is he walking through a vineyard somewhere where the temptation would be great enough to eat the grapes that he was passing by to see? So I don't think he wanted that consequence of people to know where he was at.

And while being there doesn't necessarily mean it was a sin, the fact that he hit it was. That's sin of omission, right?

He just didn't want to face those consequences. So we're going to move on to his next encounter with the lion, right? So he sees the lion and says, Hmm, that looks interesting.

[ 4 : 58 ] I want to know what it looks like when I tore this lion in half. What does this carcass look like? And in his looking, he gets tempted. And that temptation draws him to the honey that is in this corpse.

Now, I don't know about you guys, but if you've ever, you know, smelled a dead body, they are unpleasant. And this dead body has been here long enough that bees have taken up residence and produced honey.

That's not something that just happens overnight. It takes some time for honey to be produced. So me, for one, I would probably not go near this dead body to literally bend down and pick honey up out of it to eat it.

I don't know about the rest of you, but that seems a little gross to me. So now we come to his next lie of omission, right?

Still continuing this secret life of hiding, killing this lion and where he found this honey, right? And he gives some to his parents. And in doing so, in this lie of omission that he does there, right?

[ 6 : 09 ] He may or makes them religiously unclean. He puts them in a place where they shouldn't have to be because of a temptation to see this lion's corpse.

And then in seeing, he was tempted. And in that temptation, he sinned. So a lot of people hide things in their lives. The problem is that when we sin, we do need to confess those sins, and we need to let people know about those sins, okay?

Because when we hide those sins, we double down on our grievance. And when we hide our sin, we care more about the thought of people thinking that we are spiritual, that we're honorable, and so forth, than actually about doing those things.

So Samson obviously didn't like the rules. He never really follows them. And we don't like being told what to do either as humans.

Nobody likes being told what to do. God wants us to obey him because his commands will help bring holiness, happiness, and freedom.

[ 7 : 30 ] Only God actually would have known how much Samson would have done if he had kept his vow and committed to following God's plan for him.

We never get to see that come to fruition. So for us, we need to live in truth. And the way that we do that, there's a couple different ways, is one is staying away from temptation, and two, we've got to get a friend, somebody we can turn to.

The first thing, right, is staying away from temptation. We all have to learn what our temptations are, what breaks us, right?

Where do we hit that breaking point, right? And once we know what those tendencies are, we need to stay away from those tendencies so that we can avoid the temptation. Once we know what tempts us, then we have to cling to God and his word.

1 Corinthians 10.13 says this, Temptation is going to happen regardless of what happens in our lives.

[ 8 : 50 ] It's how we deal with it when we are tempted that matters. Okay? And one of those things is just to stay focused on God so that when we do know that temptation happens, okay, we can avoid it and cling to him.

And the second thing is we need to get ourselves a friend. So Samson really doesn't have any friends that we can see here. Samson seems to be a loner in all of this.

Samson's family is going to be a loner in all of this. And the reason we can kind of figure that out is because when his parents show up to this feast that he was throwing, there's nobody there with him.

So they find 30 people to come to this party to be able to be with Samson so he's not alone. It's kind of sad.

Samson was an only child at this point that we know of. So we see this story play out where his parents had to go find some people for him to hang out with.

[ 10 : 00 ] So that was part of Samson's problem. If Satan gets us a loner, it is so much easier for us to fall into temptation. We need someone who will call us out when we do wrong.

We all need somebody there that can call us out and keep us accountable. Moses had Joshua. David had Jonathan. Jesus had three friends that he leaned on. Peter, James, and John throughout his life. So we need a friend to keep us true to God's teaching. And with our friends and with everybody around us, we can't just share the bad things with them, right?

We should also celebrate our joys together, right? And we have to be outspoken about our faith with our friends. And maybe if Samson had done this, maybe he wouldn't have fallen into the temptation as much.

Somebody to hold him more accountable to what he was doing. So that's the first thing we see. We see a secret life that Samson lived.

[11:16] One where he lied about things that were happening to him. He omitted facts from his parents. And he didn't have any friends to lean on.

He lived a secret life. The next thing that we're going to see is how Samson's anger gets him into a lot of trouble and how easily he is angered.

And he let that emotion control him. So before we get to how angry Samson gets, we're going to go back and read about Samson's riddle here at this wedding party.

We're going to be in verses 12 through 14. And he says, Then Samson said to them, Let me now propound a riddle to you. If you will indeed tell it to me within the seven days of the feast and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes.

But if you are unable to tell me, then you shall give me thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes. And he said to them, Propound your riddle that we may hear it. So he said to them, Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet.

[12:23] But they could not tell the riddle in three days. So the Philistines are trying to figure out this riddle. They have no idea what it means. We're now three days into this feast, and they're starting to get worried.

So we move on to verses 17 through 20. 15 and 16 first. Then it came about on the fourth day that they said to Samson's wife, Entice your husband so that he would tell us the riddle, or we will burn you and your father's house with fire.

Have you invited us to impoverish? Is this not so? So here, we see the Philistines now are threatening Samson's wife with death if she doesn't figure out this riddle for them.

And at first, we see that Samson does resist, right? But as it gets close to that honeymoon, he gives in.

And we're going to read that here in verses 17 through 20. However, she wept before him seven days while their feast lasted. And on the seventh day, he told her because she pressed him so hard. She then told the riddles to the sons of the people.

[13:34] So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion? And he said to them, If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would have not found out my riddle.

Then the spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he went down to Eshcolon and killed 30 men and killed 30 of them and took their spoil and gave the changes of clothes to those who told the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house.

But Samson's wife was given to his companion who had been his friend. So here we see really the first time that Samson gets angry. And he carries it pretty far.

He goes down to the city of Eshcolon and kills 30 innocent men. And pretty much says, I'm taking their clothing, takes it back to this feast, throws it down on the ground in front of these people pretty much, and then storms off.

He has a giant tantrum over his wife telling them this riddle. And while I do think Samson was angered that his wife had shared, had figured out, that these people had figured out this riddle, I think he was more embarrassed over the fact, by the betrayal of his wife.

[14:55] And it made him look like a fool. We all get angry. And more often than not, it is because someone has done something to offend us.

We get cut off in traffic, a friend sharing a secret that wasn't meant to be shared. When our anger doesn't subside, we see the consequences of our actions are sometimes worse than the thing that set us off to begin with.

So, we're going to get to that here in Judges 15, 1 and 2. But after a while, in the time of wheat harvest, Samson visited his wife with a young goat and said, I will go up to my wife to her room, but her father did not let him enter.

Her father said, I really thought you had hated her intensely, so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please let her be yours instead.

So, we see that Samson's anger does subside after a time, and then he goes back to who he thought was going to be his wife, only to find out that she had been given to his companion.

[16:11] And he thought that even after this angry outburst, that everything that had happened, that he was able to be able to go back to a normal life, that things would go back to being normal.

With those angry outbursts, and you upset somebody, it's hard for things to go back to normal. Anger does not work that way.

Outbursts of anger cannot be undone. So, Judges 15, 3 through 6 says this, Samson then said to them, This time I shall be blameless in regard to the Philistines when I do them harm.

Samson went and caught 300 foxes, and took torches, and turned the foxes tail to tail, and put one torch in the middle between two tails. When he had set fire to the torches, he released the foxes into the standing grain of the Philistines, this burning up both the shocks, and the standing grain, along with the vineyards and groves.

Then the Philistines said, Who did this? Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he took his wife and gave her to his companions.

[17:24] So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire. Samson gets angry, and then other people pay for his anger.

He goes through and destroys the Philistines' harvest, their crops, everything that they've been growing throughout this year. And when he does that, their anger is turned towards somebody else. Not towards him. Towards this man and woman who had no part in what he had done. And he feels no remorse for it. He doesn't feel sorry for what happened to these people, because they had angered him.

Right? In anger, he tried to justify his actions. And we do the same thing. So, Judges 15, 7-8 says this, Samson said to them, Since you act like this, I will surely take revenge on you.

But after that, I will quit. He struck them ruthlessly with a great slaughter, and he went down and lived in the crest of the rock of Edom. And so, here we see that Samson's anger only leads to more destruction.

[18:43] And he doesn't see that. He completely misses the idea that any time that he gets angry, it just leads down a path of more destruction. Now, all anger isn't bad.

Okay? We can have a righteous anger. Paul has it against the Galatians for returning to the law when he writes to them there.

Jesus has a righteous anger when he goes out and clears the temple of the money lenders there. With righteous anger, we can be motivated to improve, grow, and strengthen our relationships.

But most anger is not healthy, righteous, or energizing. Only seeks to destroy. Now, there are some ways that we can overcome our anger.

One, we can refuse to stew on it. If we do get angry, don't continue to think about it. Move on. We have to recognize that anger is a spiritual attack.

[19:45] Satan wants to get us alone so that he can let it fester and let it stew and attack us from the inside out. We have to rely on the Holy Spirit.

Lean on him so that we can get a better understanding of what our position is. Right? The Holy Spirit is going to guide and direct us in the way that we should handle that.

We have to remember the cost of our actions. When we do act in anger, there is going to be a cost for that. And then we have to realign our heart to God.

Always coming back to God's Word to realign ourselves with his teaching and what he wants for us. So, the third thing that we see is that Samson didn't cultivate a spiritual life.

So, we're going to take a look again at Judges 15, 9-13 here. And it says, The Philistines went up and camped in Judah and spread out in Leah.

[20:49] The men of Judah said, Why have you come up against us? And they said, We have come up to bind Samson in order to do to him that he has done to us. Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock in Edom and said to Samson, Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us?

What then is this that you have done? And he said to them, As they did to me, so I have done to them. They said to them, We have come down to bind you so that may you give you into the hands of the Philistines. And Samson said to them, Swear to me that you will not kill me.

So they said to him, No, but we will bind you fast and give you into their hands. Yet surely we will not kill you. Then they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock. When he came to Leah, the Philistines shouted it as they met him.

And the spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily so that the ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire and his bonds dropped from his hands. He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey. So he reached out and took it and killed a thousand men with it.

So here we see Samson has the spirit of the Lord take over for him. And he kills a thousand men with a jawbone of a donkey.

[ 21 : 55 ] Something, again, he wasn't supposed to touch. Another dead animal. But that celebration really doesn't last that long. Judges 15, 17, and 19 says, When he had finished speaking, he threw the jawbone from his hand and he named the place Ramoth Leah.

And he became very thirsty and he called out to the Lord and said, You have given this great deliverance by the hand of your servant. And now I shall die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised.

But God split the hollow place that is in Leah so that water came out of it. When he drank, his strength returned and he was revived. Therefore he named it in Hakori, which is in Leah to this day. So here we see, even though Samson's anger had led him to this place at this point, God still provides for him. So even in all the anger that we have towards other people and everything that we do, God is still going to provide for us.

Just like he provided for Samson. When we call out, he will provide. God. So then we come to verse 20 here and he says, So he judged Israel 20 years in the days of the Philistines.

[ 23 : 13 ] Now there's a large gap that we don't see here between chapter 16 or chapter 15 and 16 that we miss out on. 20 years of life that Samson lives as he judges Israel or judges the Philistines in Israel's name.

And we don't know if his reign as a judge was good or whether it was self-centered.

It doesn't necessarily say for us. Okay? But what we do have in the verses that come before this, right, we have the way that Samson should have been living his life.

One, Samson prayed. He calls out to God. Samson revealed his understanding of his covenant with God saying, he calls out to the Lord, right, you have given me great deliverance.

He acknowledges God's sovereignty by saying that this deliverance was yours. You provided it for me. And the last thing is Samson, even for a moment, saw himself rightly.

[ 24 : 27 ] I am your servant. But Samson was really undisciplined in these actions. He wasn't used to praying to God on a regular basis. He wasn't used to being in God's word and studying it and doing those things.

So Samson compromised his vows. He was prayless and he was selfish. So we must cultivate our spiritual life unlike Samson did.

We have to read the Bible daily. We need to pray daily, depend on the Spirit, and don't compromise on anything. So we've now seen through the life of Samson how he compromised on his life, on his vow, on hiding secrets, and how his anger got the best of him.

But through all of that, God does repurpose his calling. God still uses him even at the end of his life. So we're going to go to chapter 16.

We're going to kind of skip a little bit of the story here. And we're going to look at verses 23 through 27. Now the Lord of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their God and to rejoice.

[ 25 : 47 ] For they said, Our God has given Samson our enemy into our hands. 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.

It so happened that when they were in the 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.

Then Samson said to the boy, said to the boy who was holding his hand, Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests and I may lean against them. 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.

So Samson's sin throughout all of this has made a mockery of God. The Philistines praised their own God saying he had delivered them from Samson.

But in all reality, it was Samson's sin that got him there in the first place where he ended up. Sin had made a joke out of Samson.

[ 26 : 59 ] Here we see Samson as a halftime amusement for these people. Bring him out so that we may mock him. And then right at the end here, we finally see Samson cry out one last time to God for strength.

Judges 16, 28-31 says this, 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 from my two eyes.

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. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines.

And he bent with all his might so that the house fell on the Lord's and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he had killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed in his life. Then his brothers and all his father's household came down, took him, brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtol and the tomb of Manoah his father.

This he had judged Israel twenty years. So here we see him blind, mocked, yet in this final moment he trusts God.

[ 28 : 22 ] And God used Samson in his final moments to glorify his name. Despite the broken vow, the wake of destruction that Samson had left in his life, now Samson's restoration didn't happen all at once.

The same way, God doesn't restore us all at once. When we're broken, God doesn't want us to go back to living our old life that we had before. He wants us to have a new life, right?

He wants us to grow. And this restoration comes as we release our old ways and habits and allow God to slowly rebuild our lives.

And as that happens, we become to our new purpose. And it's slowly restored to us. Now, in the story of Samson, it wasn't until the end that his purpose was partially accomplished to save Israel. He doesn't fully deliver them completely from the Philistines. With his consequences, some actions are irreversible.

[ 29 : 48 ] He couldn't go back and fully deliver the Israelites the way that God had intended his purpose to originally be because of his sin. Now, we do have hope in Samson's story.

One, he called out to God in this greatest hour of need. He humbled himself and he reengaged his purpose. God wants us to live for his purpose.

It is up to us to apply our lives to his word and learn what that purpose is and serve him. The message of Samson's encourages us to never lose hope.

We will stumble, but God can still use us even in our stumbling. One, we have to confess our mistakes to him and embrace the newfound hope that we have in him that is given through his grace.

God's purpose will be done when you set about the success at the right things. Your story is not over yet. God is not through with you. In fact, he has great things to do in your life.

[ 30 : 59 ] Don't think just because that you're older that God still doesn't have great things for you to do for your lives. And part of our purpose in life is to live for God's purpose until Christ comes back.

always look for God's purpose no matter what's going on in our lives. Through the struggles, through the heartaches, through the temptations, Samson failed.

But at the end of his life, God restored him and that process wasn't an easy one. His hair finally regrew while he was in prison. Being left to a menial task of grinding grain.

But at the end, God's purpose was still accomplished. And God's purpose through us will still be accomplished. ¶¶