

“Lessons From the Life of Samson”

Special Edition

Judges 13-16

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Craig: Regardless of how many times you’ve read the narrative of Samson, I would encourage all of us this morning to pray, even now, that the Lord through His Spirit would teach us afresh from the book of Judges and the life of Samson. And we pray that He would do that in Jesus’ name and for His glory.

So let’s look at this. I’ve got a quote to start us off. It’s a quote by Winston Churchill. It’s always a safe bet to start with a quote from Winston Churchill when you’re going to teach a group of people. There are many great quotes from Churchill. But one of Churchill’s quotes, when he was speaking about the Russians during World War II, was this. He said, *“It is a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma.”* (Laughter) *“It is a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma.”* And I believe that’s a pretty good characterization of Samson as well, isn’t it? If you know much about Samson, you know that in his life he’s kind of an enigma, isn’t he? And he certainly was a guy who was into riddles.

And his life as a beautiful figure can feel a little mysterious to us. How is it that God can use a man like Samson? When we look at the life of Samson, Samson was unpredictable and undependable. Samson was bold before men, weak before women.

Brave Man: Nobody is like that. (Laughter)

Craig: What did you say?

Brave Man: Nobody’s like that.

Craig: Ah, we’re getting to the heart of it already. (Laughter) He was empowered by the Spirit. And yet he yielded his body to the appetites of the flesh.

Samson was called to declare war on the Philistines. He fraternized with the enemy and tried to marry a Philistine woman. He fought the Lord’s battles by day and disobeyed the Lord’s commandments by night. He was given the name Samson, which means in Hebrew “sunny.” And he ended up in darkness, blinded by the enemy that he was called to conquer.

And I guess here is what we can say about Samson. You’ve already picked up on it; thank you. And that’s this. He’s a double-minded man. He’s double-minded.

Go with me to the book of James for a moment. This is the book of James, chapter 1 verse 8. We hear the writer say this. *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”*

And it seems as we look at the life of Samson that he is a good picture, that he is double-minded and that he is unstable in many regards. And the thing that I appreciate that you picked up on is this. When we look at the Scriptures I think that one of the things we can ask ourselves is this. Where do I find myself in the story:?

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I mean, it’s a story about God, right? This is all for God’s glory; He’s the hero of the story. And the point is God’s glory and His work of salvation and what He’s doing in the world. Make no mistake about it, the story is not about us.

But a question we could ask ourselves is this. Where can I find myself in the story? Who am I among these players that we read about? And when it comes to Samson, it would be really easy to throw rocks at him and say, “How was it that this guy was such a dummy?” And he really was. He was kind of a stooge when you read about him.

But the hard thing, if we really look in the mirror, is this. I’m the stooge. I’m the one who is foolish in my ways. I’m the one who can be double-minded.

Let me tell you a quick story. Several years ago, when I was in my twenties,—and I know you’re laughing; it’s several years ago now!—*(Laughter)* Several years ago I took a group of middle school boys to Camp Ligonier. We had a great time. Have you ever heard of Camp Ligonier? You know, it’s a beautiful part of the country, isn’t it? It’s great there.

And we were having a great time. And we were there with a shared camp experience, a summer camp experience with other churches. And Ligonier was putting this camp on. And I had taken an group of I don’t know, 15 or 20 boys to this camp. And we really had fun. We did all the stuff that guys do. I really sensed that the Lord was doing something all week; it was good.

And one of the things we did is that we went white-water rafting on the Yakagheny that week. Have you ever done that? It’s great, isn’t it? Loved it. And we got down there, and the tour guide had gathered everyone once we were all suited up in the rafts. And he was giving directions. And at the end of the directions he said, “I want to say one thing before we get going. Every group here has at least one leader per raft, starting with this group over here.” And you know, we’re kind of paying attention.

And we’d been bonding. We had this great tie. We had little chants we were doing, all this kind of stuff. Well, it turns out that my group, we were all in a raft together, or actually two different rafts. But I had two leaders in my raft, me and one of the young guys who was a leader along with me. And they happened to pinpoint this. And they said, “Oh, since you have two leaders, we need one of you to go over with this other group over here.”

And he motioned to the other group. Now the other group was about the wimpiest bunch of babies I had ever seen, *(Laughter)* even for junior high kids, even for middle school kids. These guys were the worst at everything we would do. We did the high ropes course. They were pathetic. You know, they were whining. They didn’t have any sense of adventure. I say this in joking. But truthfully they were; this is what we thought about them. And this group was like “Wow! We’re so glad we’re not in this group.”

There was one kid in particular who stood out in that group. And it was one of those things where we knew who they were, and we saw them.

Well, of course the group and the leader was that group, and I got volunteered, volunteered, to be a leader in that group. *(Laughter)*

Okay. So I was a little bit disappointed. I end up in the raft. I’ll make this story short; forgive me. I got into the raft with this group of guys, and it was a catastrophe from the

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beginning. Maybe you’ve said, “Well, I’ve been white-water rafting.” Well, you know, you get stuck on a rock occasionally, right? And when you do that, you’re all supposed to get on one side and leverage yourself out of it.

Well, we were getting stuck on a rock left and right, because I couldn’t get them to paddle in the same direction, and I couldn’t get them in the right cadence. And some of them weren’t working at all. It was just a mess. This is what I would expect with this particular group of boys.

We got to the halfway point. We were having our peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. And my guys all said, “What a great time we’re having!” And I’m kind of lamenting what’s going on in my group.

We get back in the raft. And as soon as we get back in the raft, we get stuck on a rock, of course. Everyone else is moving and we’re stuck on a rock, and I’m so frustrated. And as we were all moving to one side to try to get loose from this rock, one of the boys, the boy with his paddle, handling it really clumsily, smacked me right in the bridge of the nose. I heard my nose crunch.

And I was so frustrated. And in that moment I lost it. And I said, out loud, holding my nose, “I’m going to kill you!” (*Laughter*) I was so frustrated. And this echoed through the canyon we were in. (*Laughter*) All of the leaders look over at me. And I’m leading the boys, and I had ruined their day. It was terrible.

And I say all this to say that I find myself being double-minded. I mean, here I was, a leader, leading this group of boys. And what do I have? I have a bad attitude about another group of young men who were in Christ. I was not leading this group well that I was with. So on the one hand I’m praying and encouraging this one group of kids. And on the other hand I’m discouraging a group of boys, right? I’m embarrassed by that moment. Double-minded.

And so the question is this. Where do you find yourself in the story? To what degree are you double-minded in your life? And that goes really deep. The tentacles of that question are far-reaching. And it’s a good state for you to consider.

So here was my prayer this morning as I was getting prepared and coming over here. My prayer for us is this as I ask that question and we look at the life of Samson. It’s that we all consider how we’re double-minded.

On the one hand you pray for conviction, right?, that the Holy Spirit would convict us. And all the more so that conviction would lead us unto repentance. And so as we look at the life of Samson, let’s consider him and learn what we can from the Word. But also let’s consider ourselves. Let’s see ourselves in the light of Samson, and not just think of this foolish man, this man who was quick-tempered, this man who was rash, this man who was a riddle and a mystery and an enigma, and to consider how we in our lives don’t always align with the way that we say we live our lives.

I know I said 14. We have to go to 13. And so I think there are a few verses in Judges 13 because there’s a little background here that’s really important in understanding 14. And I know that most of you are familiar with this. But it’s still worth going over again.

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So starting in 13:1, *“The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.”* How about that, right? *“And so the LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.”*

Now this is the longest period of oppression that God sent His people—forty years of Philistine opposition and domination. The word *Philistines* comes from Palestine. It’s the same word. So we have the line up there. The Philistines, they were sea people. They were people from the Coast. They’d migrated from Greece to the coastal plain of Canaan.

And Samson was born in Zerah. And Zerah is a city in Dan near the Philistine border. And this border became a really, really important element of Samson’s life. Samson crossed that border to serve God and in order to satisfy his appetites. It’s interesting that he was born right there.

Samson was a judge for twenty years. And they were during these forty years of Philistine rule in Israel. So we’ll pick it back up in verse 2 of chapter 13 of Judges.

“There was a certain man of Zerah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, ‘Behold, you are barren and have not borne children. But you shall conceive and bear a son. Therefore be careful, and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite from the womb. And he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.’”

I want to say this. This is perfect timing in light of the season that we’re in. When God wants to do something really great in the world, he doesn’t send an army. He sends an angel. And not only that, this Angel visits and promises what?? A baby. And if you look through the history of the Scriptures, the plan of salvation got under way how? When Abraham and Sarah had a baby, Isaac. And Israel was delivered from Egypt by Moses coming as a baby. Israel needed revival. So what happened? God gave Samuel to Hannah, a beautiful passage of Scripture.

And then, of course, when the fullness of time came,--and this is what we’re in the midst of celebrating,--God gave a Baby, Jesus, to Mary. And we see this reflected here in this story. Here are the Israelites who are preparing to be in captivity under the domination and rule of the Philistines. And what happens? They are sent a baby, a child promised.

And do you notice something wonderful here at Christ Church? Every baby God sends is a gift from God, a new beginning, who carries tremendous potential. That’s why we’re so passionate about our stance being pro-life. That’s why we think it’s incredibly awful what is happening in our nation today with the potential in the life of a child, of a baby. And we see it right here in the Scriptures.

Now let’s speak about this Angel of the Lord for a moment. Let’s speak of this Angel of the Lord. We have good reason to believe that this Angel of the Lord is none other than Jesus Christ Himself.

Brave Man: Amen.

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Craig: Consider what was said here. Look, skip down to verse 11. *“Manoah rose and went after his wife and came to the Man and said to Him, ‘Are You the Man who spoke this to the woman?’”*

And what’s the response? He said,--

Don Nemit: I am.

Craig: I am. Can you imagine that the ground shook? There was a great wind that came through the air at that point, when the Angel as it’s stated here in the passage, says, *“I am.”*

And then we read in verse 17 that *“Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, ‘What is Your name, so that when Your words come true we may honor You?’ And the Angel of the LORD said to him, ‘Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?’”*

It’s wonderful. Now if you want to put your finger on this page and go to Isaiah 9:6, you’re going to find a passage there which is again very familiar at this time of year. If someone has it, would you read it for us? Isaiah 9:6, who has it? If you have it, go ahead and read it. If you’ve got it memorized you can recite it.

Bishop Rodgers: I have it. *“His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,”* almighty God, and so forth.

Craig: Yes. And so forth; I like that translation. *(Laughter)* But yes. The key thing you point out here is this, the word *“wonderful”* here. And that is the same word from which we get this same translation of *wonderful* here; it’s the same root. And so you see that there’s this evidence here that we have: that this is Jesus.

In fact, we see a similar kind of thing in the book of Genesis. If you want to study it later on, look at Genesis 32:29.

Transcriber’s Note: Genesis 32:29, NKJV. *“Then Jacob asked, saying, ‘Tell me Your name, I pray.’ And He said, ‘Why is it that you ask about My name?’ And He blessed him there.”*

Craig: And you’ll see there that a similar question is asked about an Angel, and a similar response is given. And so we see the evidence of Jesus, who wasn’t simply a Person who came on the scene in Bethlehem two thousand-plus years ago. He has always been.

Don: Amen.

Craig: He has existed from before the foundation of the world. He’s the Lamb who was slain from before the foundation of the world. And so Jesus shows up in powerful ways. Here He is even at the birth of Samson.

Now one last thing before we get into 14. You have this Nazarite vow that’s mentioned. And you may know something about the Nazirite vow. It comes from the Hebrew word *to consecrate* or *to separate*. So Samson was one who was consecrated to God. He was one who was separated out for a holy purpose. John the Baptist was also a Nazirite from his mother’s womb. You might remember that.

And here is what this meant for a person. They abstained from drinking wine and strong drink. And the other thing was this: they avoided touching dead bodies. Two really important things, and the mark that made them stand out was that they allowed their hair to grow. So no wine or strong drink, no touching dead bodies.

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Ted Wood: May I ask why dead bodies were a problem?

Craig: You know, that is a great question. And I’m not sure that I have the insight into that. I’ll do some research and maybe get back to Sig on that, and I’ll let you know.

Kevin Cohn: He drank wine, right?

Craig: Yes, he did.

Kevin: He made his promise.

Craig: The Nazirite vow. Does someone else have insight into this?

Sig Tragard: Dead bodies were unclean.

Craig: That’s right.

Sig: I defer to the Bishop over here. Didn’t I hear the Bishop speaking earlier? You know the answer to that. *(Laughter)*

Bishop Rodgers: I think it was ritually unclean. It was somewhat dangerous physically and just plain esthetically.

Craig: But couldn’t you say that would apply to all the people?

Bishop Rodgers: Yes.

Craig: Maybe with this particular thing there’s more of a line there. Maybe the dead bodies, being unclean, applied to all of Israel. Yes?

Kevin: The dead bodies, when they died, weren’t they made clean? *(Unclear)* Wasn’t that a ritual with the dead bodies?

Craig: Yes. Good question. Like I said, I can do a little more research on that one. You caught me flat-footed there. It’s a good question. It’s only this group that asks questions like that. *(Laughter)* I should have been more ready. That being said, the Nazirite vow. This was ordinarily for a limited period of time. With most people this was something that was for a set number of days or weeks or months, or perhaps even years. In Samson’s case it was to last his whole life. This was an unusual Nazirite vow. And the secret to Samson’s strength was thought to be his Nazirite vow.

Now one little aside, and this is just a personal thing. You know, we tend to think of Samson, especially when I was a young boy, maybe you were like me. You picture that he sort of looks like Arnold Schwarzenegger in his prime. You picture that. But when you think about it, it might be more consistent to think according to the way that God works, that he looked like an ordinary man and had extraordinary strength.

You know, we have reason to believe that our Savior was One who was not remarkable in His appearance. Yet He was the Son of God. And it could very well be that he wasn’t a physically strong man. That would have spoken to a person who had physical prowess. This was a gift of the Spirit, his strength, his super-human strength. And so it does seem to make sense that Samson wasn’t Duane Johnson. But rather he actually looked like an ordinary man who had great strength not from his weight-lifting, but from the Lord.

Sig: Amen.

Craig: You and I could have that strength. I can’t look like Arnold Schwarzenegger. But I can have the strength of the Lord if I amend to the Holy Spirit.

Don: It’s like David.

Craig: That’s right.

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Don: Saul and David. David was a little runty dude.

Craig: That’s right. So we see that evidence, don’t we, all over God’s word. So it makes sense in my mind that Samson would not have been the way that the cartoon people draw him for the children’s curriculum. Actually he looked like an ordinary man. So just a thought on that.

We’re going into 14 now. Okay, and I’ve titled this in my notes *Samson Loses It*.

You know, when I was a kid my mom would chalk up her forgetfulness or her being a bad dude to this. She would say, “I think I’m losing it.” That was what my mom used to say. Well, we’re going to see here that Samson loses it. And there are four things that we’re going to see in this passage that he loses. He loses *his respect for his parents*. He loses *his Nazirite separation*. He loses *control of his tongue*. And then finally *he loses his temper*. And so we’re going to look at these things here. And I think I have about what, twenty minutes to wrap this up. Is that right? Okay, so I’d better hurry up.

Don: It’s Christmas vacation; you’ve got all day. *(Laughter)*

Craig: All right. So let’s get into this. Now we’re in 14. Let’s begin in verse 1 and read through verse 4.

“Samson went down to Timnah. And at Timnah he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up and told his father and mother, ‘I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife.’

“But his father and mother said to him, ‘Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives among all our people, that you must go and take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?’

“But Samson said to his father, ‘Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes.’” Oh, right in my eyes!

“His father and mother did not know that it was from the LORD, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines.” That part stands out to me. *“And at the time the Philistines ruled over Israel.”*

So Samson loses respect for his parents. Samson was given a godly heritage. He was raised to honor the Lord. But he obviously wouldn’t listen to his parents when they came and they warned him. He wandered into enemy territory. Once again, there’s that border life that he had. He was captivated by a woman and decided to marry her. This was contrary to God’s law.

And we see this reflected even in the New Testament. If you want to write down a Scripture you can look up later on, it’s 2 Corinthians 6, verses 14-18.

Transcriber’s Note: 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, ESV. *“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said, ‘I will make My dwelling among them, to walk among them. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’*

“Therefore, ‘go out from their midst and be separate,’ says the LORD, ‘and touch no unclean thing. Then I will welcome you, and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,’ says the LORD Almighty.”

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Craig: We see this same idea, being unequally yoked, represented in the Scriptures. And Samson is interesting He was called. His calling, his purpose, would have been to go to war against the Philistines. Instead, he’s going to a wedding. Or he wants to go to a wedding.

And again, what was Samson doing? He was doing what was right in his eyes. We see this reflected in the Old Testament in other places, where the judgment on Israel is that *“every person did what was right in his own eyes.”* And we see Samson here doing what was right in his own eyes.

I think we live in times where people are doing what is right in their own eyes. Every person does what is right according to what they think. There’s no longer a holy standard. There’s no longer a sense of the Scriptures having authority as a governing piece of work and truth in our lives. We’ve become a people where we all do what is right in our own eyes.

And the truth is that again, while I want to point the finger at everything else in our culture about that, I have to point my finger at myself and say, “To what degree am I living like Samson? To what degree am I doing what is right in my own eyes, what I think I should do?”

And sometimes this gets difficult, doesn’t it? When there are big decisions in life to make, How do I handle them?

Someone came up to me after church a couple weeks ago and said, “Okay. We’re in the middle of a time when we’re really struggling to see provision in our lives. We’re looking for employment and for work. We really want to trust God. We truly want to trust the Lord. But we’re not sure what to do, and our money is running out,” you know? And so they were in a place where they didn’t want to do what was right according to their own thoughts and actions and ideas. They wanted to rely on the Lord.

Sometimes it can be difficult. But there has to be a sense in our lives where we have to reject the proclivity to do what is right in our own eyes. That’s what Samson does here.

And this is interesting now. This is the first thing that stands out to me. It says that *“his parents didn’t know that it was from the LORD,” “for the LORD was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines.”* So what was God doing despite Samson’s living by sight and not by faith, despite the fact that he’s doing what is right in his own eyes? The Lord is accomplishing His purposes in spite of him. That’s what we see happening here.

And so don’t look at this necessarily as the Lord approving of Samson’s life and his ways and the things that he’s doing. Don’t be confused in our own lives, in our own churches, when we see that God is being gracious and good, and that He is still working despite poor leadership, despite depraved people, despite decisions that aren’t in keeping with His holy purposes. We shouldn’t be surprised that it’s God’s will that His kingdom marches on and that He fulfills His purposes. God sometimes overrules our work. And He will work in spite of our decisions.

Have you thought of times in your life like this, where you were going down one road, and you were convinced in what you had to do, but God in spite of all that still worked all things together. We quoted it in Scripture this morning. *“God works all things together for the good of those who love Him.”* And so we see the evidence of that here. It’s not

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that God is approving of the ways of Samson and his decision and his propensity to live according to his own ways. No, He is working His purposes out in spite of our decisions. Yes?

Don: What I see here is a reiteration of God in Kadesh-Barnea, where the spies went to Israel to spy out the land. God sent Samson down to the Philistines to look at them. And what did he do? He said, “Oo la la!” But God’s purpose is still working because God just repeats this all through the Bible. And what He did He is going to do and it will continue. So if you’re dumb enough to think you’re going to outdo God, guess what? Wake up!

Craig: Yes. And who are we to think that we have the power to undo the holy purposes of God? We certainly do not. I love that insight; that’s really good. God accomplishes His purposes either with us or in spite of us.

Don: Amen.

Craig: Which way would you rather be? Wouldn’t you rather be with Him than cutting across the grain? And so we see that with Samson it wasn’t important for him to please the Lord or even his parents. He lived to please himself. That’s what we see.

And I’ll give you another cross-reference here: 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, if you want to write that down. I’m going to read this one to you. *“For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not from the Father, but is from the world.”* And by the way, I’m sorry. That was 1 John 2:16. I said that was in 2 Corinthians. That was 1 John 2:16. And certainly we see that the lust of the eyes was something that captivated Samson and something that perhaps captivates us.

But here’s my question in light of him losing respect for his parents. That’s really the root of what we’re seeing in this section of the narrative of Samson. When it comes to authority, what is your relationship with authority? The Lord places authority in our lives as a governance, as a check, as a way of directing us. And I find myself pretty consistently having to check myself, and asking myself the question. Okay, how am I submitting to the authority that God has placed in my life?

Most of you have a boss. If you have a boss you have a board of directors, right? Or a wife. *(Laughter)* What do you think I meant when I said “boss?” *(Laughter)*

Brave Man: You’re being recorded here. *(Laughter)*

Craig: You know, if we’re finding ourselves running roughshod over authority in our lives,—and you can make a lot of excuses for that, right? You can rationalize that; this is a terrible authority. But we could point people to David, right? And of course David is probably the greatest example of one who in spite of bad authority submitted to it, surrendered to it, because he had a holy sense of God’s purpose in that authority, not only for him but for all Israel in that time. And so Samson reminds us of this. What is your relation to authority?

Let’s keep going. Let’s pick it back up in verse #5. It says that *“Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah. And they came to the vineyards of Timnah. And behold, a young lion came toward him, roaring. And then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him. And although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces, as one tears a young goat. But he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.”*

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By the way, I don't know about you, but I haven't even torn a young goat, so I must be pretty weak. *(Laughter)* I don't quite get that illustration.

“But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. And then he went down and talked with the woman. And she was right in Samson's eyes.” There we have it again. Samson does what is right in Samson's eyes, not what's important to the Lord.

“After some days he returned to take her. And he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey. He scraped it out with his hands and went on, eating as he went. And he came to his father and his mother, and gave some to them, and they ate. But he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey from the carcass of the lion.”

Well, why hadn't he done that?

Don: Because it wasn't the time for his death.

Craig: You got it. You're paying attention.

Don: He was a man of life.

Craig: He was.

Don: He was ordained by God to be a man of light and life. And as Jesus said to the young man who said, “I want to go and bury my father,” He said, “Let the dead bury the dead.” And let the living deal with the living. Samson was set apart to be life.

Craig: He was light, right?

Don: Yes, he was. But boy, did he turn dark!

Craig: Preach it, brother! That's good stuff right there, man; that's really good. He was foreordained to be a man of life, even though it happened through him that many would be killed. He was life to God's people.

Someone asked the question. Why wasn't he able to touch the dead bodies? Well, he was a person of life, called to be that.

And so what do we see here? This is really the crux of it all. This is where Samson loses his Nazirite separation. We see two things here. We see his detour into a vineyard. Now what is a guy who is a Nazirite, who is not to touch strong drink, doing in a vineyard? What's he doing there? Why is he going to this place? He should avoid this with everything that is in him, because it is something that he is called to be set apart from. And here he is in a vineyard. And of course he has the lion. So what do you see? It's a dangerous place for a guy like him who has a Nazirite vow.

A lion attacks. And I would suggest that this is set by the Lord as a warning that he's walking in the wrong path. God sends us warnings like that' doesn't He, in His mercy and His grace. “What are you doing in the vineyard, man? Why are you here? I'm chasing you out.”

Samson, of course, is able through the Lord's power to defeat the lion. And so he went back to this vineyard again to gloat over his victory.

And one other thing. He had the lust of the flesh, of course, the lust of the eyes, and now the pride of life, because he's gloating about the honey and what he had done with this lion. And so he scoops up the honey. And now he's defiled by a dead body. If you include the hair being the outward sign of the vow, two-thirds of the Nazirite vow are

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gone in this one little section of Scripture here. He’s just sold it all off and doesn’t really seem to care much about what he is doing, which is right in his eyes.

Here’s the question again, to point it towards us. The question is this. Are there ways in which you are disregarding the ways of the Lord? You know, Samson was disregarding the ways of the Lord. He got caught up in his own hype. “I’m a strong man. All I have to do is that I don’t have to cut this hair. As long as I have this hair, I’m strong.”

By the way, that’s a lie. His strength came from the Lord, not from his hair. The hair was a sign of his vow. The hair was merely something that was in place as a reminder. It’s much like a wedding ring. This ring isn’t my marriage. This is a symbol of my marriage, my covenant commitment to my wife. This is supposed to remind me of God’s love and the way our love for one another should be, and the commitment that I made on July 15, 2000. I remember that. It’s on the inside of my ring. *(Laughter)*

You know, in the same way the hair wasn’t the secret of his strength. Nothing Samson could do could make him believe in that. He lost sight of what was right. And he had disregarded the ways of the Lord, evidenced here by the fact that he was walking in a vineyard, and he’s touching dead bodies, the two things that he was called to swear off of in his life. So again, let’s examine ourselves. Are you disregarding the ways of the Lord in any way?

And I’m talking specifically about the Word. Do you find yourself this morning like the rich young ruler. “I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was a kid. Give me something else. Not me, buddy!” I need to examine myself according to this holy standard and consider how I’m being like Samson, because do you know what? Again, where do I find myself in the story?: I’m not saying that I’m looking at Samson and saying, “Ha! Man, what a dummy! I can’t believe he did that!” No, I am Samson. And I would suggest that you are Samson as well.

Don: Amen.

Craig: As crazy as it seems, this guy would walk into a vineyard and touch a dead body. But if we really, Really put the magnifying glass to ourselves, we’ll find that perhaps we’re in a similar way. I give that to you. Sir?

Kevin: *(Unclear)* Why had he not feared God? If he feared God, he wouldn’t be doing this. It seems that he had no fear in his life toward God. That caused his fall.

Craig: Perhaps that’s the root of it. Perhaps that’s the root of a person disregarding the ways of the Lord. Perhaps that’s the root of a culture that turns it’s back. There is no holy reverence, no holy fear of the Lord present in our lives, among our people, among our churches, that we would consider that. We need to surrender to His ways and to seek His ways.

Don: Amen.

Craig: That might be the root of it.

Brave Man: Our culture mocks God.

Craig: We really do.

Brave Man: Thank God for His grace.

Greg: His long-suffering, mercy and grace for us. And again, I know I keep harping on this. And maybe it’s just me. I find myself being so judgmental of Samson, and so

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easily dismissing him. Oh, what a clown, right? But again I want to force myself, I want to force us, to put ourselves in his shoes how in our lives we do the exact same things in a contemporized way.

We’re picking up in verse 10. We’re going to read a decent section of Scripture. I’m going to read all the way through 18. We’ll see here that he lost control of his tongue. This is an important element to look at.

“His father went down to the woman. And Samson prepared a feast there, for so the young men used to do. And as soon as the people saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him.

“And Samson said to them, ‘Let me now put a riddle to you. If you can tell me what it is within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes. But if you cannot tell me what it is, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes.’”

“And they said to him, ‘Put your riddle, that we may hear it.’ And he said to them, ‘Out of the ear, something to eat; Out of the strong came something sweet.’

And in three days they could not solve the riddle. On the fourth day they said to Samson’s wife, “Entice your husband. Tell us what the riddle is, lest we burn you and your father’s house with fire. Have you invited us here to impoverish us?” And Samson’s wife wept over him and said, ‘You only hate me; you do not love me. You have put a riddle to my people and you have not told me what it is.’

“He said to her, ‘Behold, I have not told my father nor my mother. Shall I tell you?’ She wept before him the seven days the feast lasted. And on the seventh day he told her, because she pressed him hard.” Oh, boy! Delilah did so, too.

“Then she told the riddle to her people. And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, ‘What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?’

“And he said to them, ‘If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle.’”

Wow! It’s a misguided joke, a riddle borne out of sin, making light of the sin that he had participated in willingly. And it ends up being a very expensive thing to him, a very expensive and a very costly thing to Samson. And I just want to point this out because I want to get to the end here quickly.

But this woman, this Philistine woman, enticed him. You see that at the beginning of the chapter. She later controlled him, and then she betrayed him. She enticed him, controlled him, betrayed him. And this is the way the world always treats a compromised believer. The world will entice you. The world will control you. And then what will the world do?

Brave Man: Betray you.

Craig: Betray you. This is the way the enemy works. This is why the Proverbs speak specifically against adultery, that her lips are what? *“Sweet as honey.”* But it’s poison. It’s the same pattern. We’re enticed by the ways of this world, and then we’re controlled

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by them. And where do they leave us? They leave us empty and hurting. They leave us betrayed. And that’s what we see here with Samson.

I want that to be it, okay? There’s a lot more we could talk about in this chapter. Ultimately we see that Samson is this incredibly flawed person. But if you flip to Hebrews 11, it’s the most remarkable thing you find there in Hebrews 11. And that’s this. We see the name of Samson, of all people, mentioned in what many of us might refer to, or heard referred to, as “The Bible Hall of Fame.” I believe it’s in verse 32. Am I right? Yes, it’s in 11:32.

“And what more shall I say?” the writer says. *“I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice and gained what was promised, who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, escaped the edge of the sword, whose weakness was turned to strength, and who became powerful in battle, and routed foreign armies.”*

“Whose weakness was turned to strength.” Listen! Here’s the good news for us. God uses broken people. You’re not disqualified because of your past. And I know that I can get nuanced with that whole thing about who is disqualified for ministry. I have a friend who people debate about, whether he’s been disqualified for ministry. That can be very nuanced.

But I’m going to speak in a general way to us, to the people of God here. You’re not disqualified because of your past. You’re not disqualified because of your weakness here today. The Lord clearly uses broken individuals, weak individuals, and does so not for our glory, but for His, to shame the ways of the world.

Samson was a judge. A judge—and that word means *deliverer* or *savior*. Samson was a deliverer of Israel. Samson was, in a way, with a small s, a savior in his time for Israel when they were under the rule of the Philistines.

And of course, what does this do? This points us to the true Deliverer, the true Judge, the true Savior.

I think we all know the end of Samson’s life. He was blind, as we said earlier. He was in darkness, a guy who was called to light. And before his death he prays a prayer and asks God to be glorified one last time. And he wipes out more Philistines than he had previously.

And this is interesting how this mirrors, in a way, the life of Jesus and the end of Jesus’ life. What does Jesus do with His life? He extends His arms on a cross. And He says, “Father, forgive them.”

And while Samson claimed more deaths through his death than he had previously accomplished, Jesus Christ saved more lives through his death. He’s the true Deliverer. He’s the true Savior. He is the real Judge. And so all of this points to Him. It points to Him.

Don: Samson is the example of Jeremiah 18, the potter and the clay, because he was broken as the example of this. And then God restored him to what He wanted him to be.

Craig: That’s right.

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Don: Just like every one of us. I think *I’m down and out*. Don’t listen to other people, because they don’t know what they’re talking about, as you said the Bible does. I love Jeremiah 18. I use that all the time. We can be restored. Thank you.

Craig: Yes. And Samson is a great example of God’s purposes being fulfilled despite our flawed ways. And it certainly points us to Christ. So let our hope be in Christ today.

Brave Men: Amen.

Craig: We’re a bunch of Samsons, unfortunately. But the good news is this. God uses broken people. And His great story through Jesus Christ will be accomplished. And there is not one of us who can detract from that in any way.

Don: Amen.

Craig: Amen?

Brave Men: Amen.

Craig: Thank you for being so faithful. Thank you for coming. I’ll look forward to seeing you again. (*Applause*)