

# Samson: Strength Outside, but Not Inside

Judges 13 - 16

Dr. Matt Cassidy – August 14, 2022

Well, today's the first day—this begins the school year for many people. For those of you who don't know, school starts this week. And so, when our kids were young I thought that the beginning of the school year is more like the beginning of the year. So, start a year all over again, start anew—why not start our lives anew? I was hoping we could talk today about how this could be the first day of the rest of your life.

The passage we're going to look at today was written for such a topic. We're going to look at Judges chapters 13 through 16. It's in the older Testament. You can go there, and we're actually going to survey it today. You could read, I'll point out some things to look for in the details, because it is not just the story of a man named Samson; it is a masterclass in storytelling when you see the details and what the author's up to. If we can learn from this man Samson, it's beautiful.

And it's not just a biography of Samson; it's not just well told. Samson is iconic for all mankind. Scholars abound to declare that Samson is representing Israel and all of mankind. The famous **John Milton** said this about Samson: “*O mirror of our fickle state.*” And he is.

## God Intervenes

And the story begins, and it's very bad in Israel. How bad is it? It's so bad, that it begins with that classic intervention by God in such a way that He makes himself known obviously. He comes into the sludge and the slime of our own decision making and where it's gotten us and says, *I'll take it from here.* And what does that look like? It's when He comes in and He has the angel of the Lord come to a woman who was barren and announce that she's soon to have a miraculous conception and pregnancy. It's Yahweh saying, *I've had enough. I'm coming in there and I'm going to fix it in a way so that everyone knows that my hand is on this.*

Look what it says in chapter 13. The whole story starts in verse 1. “**And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years ... 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.’”

### **Judges 13:4-5**

**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 Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.**

Now this is the important characteristic of this 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 Nazirite unto God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.”**

### **The Nazirite Vow**

**“He will be a Nazirite from the womb, a Nazirite unto God.”** What does that mean? The word “Nazirite” in Hebrew means “to separate, consecrate, to abstain.” Now we know what the Nazirite is, and typically it’s a vow that happens in a person’s life when they say, *I’m making a Nazirite vow for six weeks*. And it’s a vow to holiness. And we know the details of that vow by going back farther in the Old Testament in Numbers 6 where Moses says that this is a Nazirite vow: *When any man or any woman wants to consecrate themselves, to make themselves holy for a period of time, I want you to be separate from these three things that show you are separating yourselves to God for holiness.*

Three things—the first one is to abstain from anything and all things grape. Do not drink from the wine or strong drink. Don’t drink vinegar that’s made from wine or strong drink. Don’t even eat grapes. You can’t have grape juice, you can’t have grapes, you can’t even have raisins, because it’s showing that you’re separate.

### **Numbers 6:4**

**All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins.**

Look what it says in Number 6:4: “All the days of your separation he shall eat nothing that comes from the produce of the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins.” It’s just to show you’re separate.

### **Numbers 6:5**

**All the days of his vow of separation, no razor shall touch his head. Until the time is completed for which he separates himself to the Lord, he shall be holy. He shall let the locks of hair of his head grow long.**

The second thing you’re to abstain from is death. Because death is unclean ... but he says, “**All the days of your vow as a symbol of separation ... all the days of a Nazirite ...**” Because God is holy, it says that your father, your mother, your sister, your brother—you can’t be in the room, you can’t be near anything dead, because that separation is a sign of holiness.

Nothing from the grape, nothing that is dead ... and then there’s this symbol of not cutting your hair. It’s a symbol of this consecration. As it’s explained in verses 5 and 6 here: “**All the days of his vow of separation, no razor shall touch his head. Until the time is completed for which he separates himself to Yahweh, he shall be holy. And he shall let the locks of hair of his head grow long.**” And then later in the passage that idea is called “the hair of the consecration.”

So, here’s the idea here, that Samson, this child that’s going to be born, is going to have this Nazirite vow, not for six weeks or for a month, but for his entire life. And when we see this story begin with a miraculous birth and then this Nazirite vow from birth, we’re looking at something that reminds us of the story of Abraham’s miraculous child Isaac. And then later we’ll see that Samuel is born in the same context of a barren woman that has this miraculous child. And this is God saying in a billboard way: *I am stepping in here. I am sovereignly quiet often, but now I’m coming in in a billboard kind of way and saying, I’m doing this. This Samson, a*

*Nazirite from the womb, is going to separate himself to be holy because I have a great purpose for him and he's going to lead Israel away from the servitude of the Philistines.*

Samson's name means "little sun"—S-U-N--there's hope, right? We can see the light of day again. This Samson ... this is going to be great.

## Samson's Strength

And you should just read about the exhibitions of great power that Samson has. I mean, it's one chapter after another of the spirit of God coming upon Samson, and he's doing these marvelous things.

In chapter 14 he's walking down this path and this lion comes out and roars and pounces on him. And then it says, "**The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson and he tore that lion to pieces as one tears a young goat.**" I don't know how to tear a young goat. Do you know how to tear a young goat? But he tore a lion like you'd tear a young goat. That's amazing.

The next chapter he finds himself trapped by an entire army of the Philistines. And he looks around, and it says that the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him in a mighty way. He grabs a jawbone of a donkey and slaughters a thousand men. He writes a little song, a little poem, about it. He says, "**With a donkey's jawbone I have made donkeys out of them. With a donkey's jawbone I have killed a thousand men.**" They named the place where he killed those men the Hill of the Jawbone. Yeah. He's powerful.

The very next chapter—now we're in chapter 16—he finds himself trapped inside the gates of the fortified capital city of the Philistines, called Gaza. So, he's in there and he's asleep, and the men of Gaza realize that they have him. They lock the front gates. The fortified cities are only as strong as the gates, so these are huge gates. They lock him inside, they say, *Look, at daybreak we're going to kill him.* So, they all go back to bed waiting for the sun to come up. And in the middle of the night Samson wakes up and realizes that they locked the gates on him, and says, *You know what? I got this.* There's an inventory of all that Samson does just to show off his power. He pulls up the gates of the city and just stacks them up. Then he grabs the poles that they're hanging on and stacks them up. And then, of course, the crossbeam too. He grabs these five things, gets underneath them, puts them on his shoulders, and then carries them uphill thirty-eight miles.

He could've just kicked the door in, right? And why do you do that? Samson's trying to make a point here. Because it's going to take the Gaza-ites at least three days—one day up, one day to load stuff, and one day back. They're going to take maybe four or five ox carts as they load the gates, load the crossbeam, load the two posts. The whole time, everyone's thinking the same thing. No one is talking out loud. Don't mess with Samson. I mean, who was the guy who said, *Oh, we've got him trapped—lock the gates!* How about we leave him alone?

The point is, this man supernaturally strong when the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him. He's quite witty and clever. And he's full of potential. But before we chisel a statue and put in the middle of the town square or get us t-shirts with an image of Samson flexing for us ... that's not what the author wants us to know about his character. This whole idea of “full of potential”—if you look it up, “potential” is Latin for a used Kleenex. It's not good for anything. Potential is nothing. The author wants us to know that he has all this power inside, but he has no self-control, no power on the inside. As a matter of fact, every story of his supernatural power to get out of trouble was because he couldn't control his passions that got him into the trouble.

### Author's Introduction to Samson

This is how you know what the author wants you to know about Samson. He's using this classic storytelling rule, and that is, when you introduce a character, you're introducing who he is essentially, in his soul. So, we need to listen to the first words that come out of his mouth, the first conversation that he has, the first scene that he's in.

#### Judges 14:3

**But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes. She looks good to me.”**

And that takes place when our “little sun” is introduced in chapter 14, verses 1 through 3. Let me read that. This is what the author says is the nature of this man. **“Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw a woman of the daughters of the Philistines. And when he came up and told his father and mother, ‘I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. And now I want her to be my wife.’**

**“But his father and mother said to him, ‘Is there no one amongst the daughters of your own tribe? Is there no one in all of Israel that you’d be interested in? Surely you can find a wife outside one of these uncircumcised Philistines?’”** He’s making a point. And here are the words. **“But Samson said to his father, ‘Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes. She looks good to me.’”**

*So, Son, tell me about this girl. How did you guys meet? What does she enjoy? What are her hopes? Does she know about Yahweh?*

*Huh? She look good to me. Get her for me.*

## **Samson’s Two Voids**

Samson’s famous demise is because he has two voids within his soul that will destroy him. He has two vacancies that will lead to him being killed. And again, these two lackings have been the cause of death for hundreds of millions of people over tens of thousands of years. These are not unique to him. If these voids show up, there are bills to pay. And so, the author says, *Pay close attention to these, because this isn’t just a history lesson. This is a warning to every man, woman, and child.*

These things you must have. The first thing is this, to know thy God. **Know thy God.** Samson was to be a Nazirite, holy, dedicated to the Lord from the womb. And that talks about God’s holiness. God is holy; Samson is holy. And holiness means to set yourself apart from the mire of the world and then set yourself separate to Yahweh for His purpose. And when God says He’s holy and you be holy, He’s not joking. God says, “Be holy as I am holy.” Both testaments have this command. And it’s because God says, *Look, I am holy, and you’re in my image. You will be who you were meant to be when you are holy. And if you choose not to be, you’ll destroy your own life.* And that’s what happens with Samson.

The real story of Samson the way it’s told here is just this rapid-fire renouncement of each of the commitments of consecration. I mean, it’s chapter after chapter of him dropping his distinctives that make him separate from the world like he’s embarrassed to have them, instead of being honored to be chosen by God. And so, when you look at it, it says to avoid all things with death because God is life. And if you read the story about when he tears that lion in half, Samson comes back later on and there’s this rotting carcass of a lion, but bees have made a hive out of it and there’s honey flowing everywhere. And so, Samson goes into the dead carcass and

grabs a bowl of honey and walks home eating that because it looked good to him. And then when he gets home, it says he brings his parents into it without them knowing it. *Hey, want some of this honey? It's really good.*

He has no respect for his vows. He's supposed to have an anaphylactic, allergic reaction to every single thing grape. That means he's supposed to set himself apart from the simplistic joys of the world because God is his joy. Again, you read the stories and you can see that his wedding celebration to his Philistine wife begins with a seven-day feast with his Philistine groomsmen—and a feast in Hebrew means a time of drinking. Second vow—dropped like an insignificant hot rock.

### **Judges 16:4**

**After this it came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.**

His ultimate demise to Delilah—I think we know that story about Samson and Delilah—but where did this cute couple meet? How did they run into each other? Look what it says in chapter 16: **“After this it came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.”** The valley of Sorek is known for its ... it's subtitle in the chamber of commerce is the home of choice red grapes. So, here's a guy who's not supposed to have grape jelly on a single bagel and he's in the capital of wine country. Know thy God. And thy God is holy, and we're to be holy. And Samson is an archetype for us.

So, do you know God, the God that's in the Bible? Do you define God or does God define you? Who chooses what is right and real and true? Do we just look at the passages that we enjoy, or the passages that make us uncomfortable, and we have to choose if we're going to change our lives, or do we negotiate and debate and rationalize and say, *Yeah, you know ...* Do we do what we must do? And this is no easy thing, but do we do what we must do to hear the quiet of God's Spirit in our souls? Or is it a nagging gnat that just gets chewed away so we can get on with what we were going to do anyway?

Samson would tell that he had maybe an eighty percent commitment to his Nazirite vow. That's like saying you have an eighty percent commitment to your marriage vow. Ask your mate what they would think of that? Know what holiness is about God. It is separate from the world,

to Him, for a purpose: to be an instrument of His glory. And yet, Samson is constantly separating himself from God so he can separate himself to the world.

And in Samson's storyline, we find that it's just a script of a failed life. It's descriptive of a person who failed to know God. That's one of the voids that he had in his soul.

**The second absence that he has that we need to take to heart is that he did not “know thyself.”** You have to know who you are—know thyself. In a single sentence, Samson can be defined as a person who chose to allow his passions to rule his life. Samson chose—he's not a victim—to allow the passions of his life to rule his life. His story is that he's pursuing women that he's not even supposed to know exist. And then, on the other hand, he's having these raging, angry vengeance sprees. And the way it's written, it's a pursuit of lust and a pursuit of revenge. And then there's another pursuit of lust and another pursuit of anger. There's another pursuit of lust and a final pursuit of anger and rage. And each and every supernatural event that we've read about here, that we've been impressed with, it's been because he got trapped by his own lustful passions. And God in His mercy said, *I'll use that to kill the Philistines off, I guess.*

### **Proverbs 16:3**

**Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his passions is stronger than he who takes a city.**

Proverbs 16 states it very clearly: **“Whoever is slow to anger”**---ooh, patient--- **“Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his passions is stronger than he who takes a city.”** Samson is strong as a warhorse. But he's on bridle and just brings destruction to everything he touches. He has no power over his passions. He can tear a lion in half, in mid-air. But you send a ninety-pound female into the ring with him and he taps first round. He goes down every time.

So, understand this. That Samson, who as the “little sun” is supposed to bring hope and bring us life and bring us brightness—his story is just a series of repeat offenses. You know the gate story in Gaza where he took the gates up? Gaza is a fortified capital city of the Philistines. Why was he even there? Because he was visiting a prostitute. Oh. Okay. And then the author writes it in such a way that he flees Gaza to run into the arms of Delilah and falls in love with her. Delilah's name means “the weak one.” The weak one against the strong one ... in what

way? She's offered a lifetime of income to entice him to reveal what his secret strength is. Can you imagine that interaction?

*Hey, Samson, what's a Nazirite like you doing in a place like this? Do you visit Napa Valley often? Why is he even there?*

### **Judges 14:5**

**And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him, to humble him."**

Judge 14:5 explains what's happening here. **"And the lords of the Philistines came to Delilah and said to her, 'Seduce him'"**—"entice him" is a better phrase—" **'and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him, that we may humble him.'**" Now who's going to write a poem and a song?

And so, she goes to him and entices him—Tell me your story. And she's not subtle. *How can you be like any other man?* And he lies to her and it doesn't work. And then, *How can you be like any other man?* A second time he lies to her and it doesn't work a second time. And then she asks again, *How can you be like any other man?* He lies and it doesn't work a third time.

Listen, if you're thinking when you read this, you're supposed to be thinking, *This sounds like a rerun from chapter 14 where his Philistine wife enticed a secret out of him.* There's no creativity in this story. And right here it's like the record is skipping, because she asks the exact same question three times in a row. And so, as readers we're supposed to be looking at this and yelling at the script and the main characters. *Samson, do you see what's going on here? This isn't the first time! Have you learned nothing from your previous failures? I mean, she keeps asking you the same question, again and again. You just need to get out of there.* I mean, a blind man could see what is happening and where this ends.

How does that happen? How come he can't see what's plain before all of our eyes? Sin makes you crazy. Did you know that? If you practice sin, you'll go insane. When you have a temptation, the first time you go up against that, that's the easiest that temptation is going to be. If you say no to it, the next time it will be easier still. If you say yes to it, the next time gets harder, and the time after that gets harder. And the next thing you know, you're getting pretty

good at practicing sin. And then, next thing you know, you're making sense out of senselessness, because you have to justify how you got there. And the next thing you know, you're trapped inside your own passions. Look, Sting said it in the last verse of that song: "I'll be wrapped around your finger." Jimmy Buffett in "Margaritaville," the song he's most famous for, about his alcoholism and his drunkenness, he works his way through, and the last verses says, "Now I know it's my own darn fault." Yeah, it always has been.

### **Hebrews 3:14**

**But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**

Could I quote another source of authority? Hebrews puts it this way: **"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."** Sin makes you crazy because it hardens your heart. You've got to keep going back, you've got to justify it somehow. *Well, next time it's going to be different. Or, My mate had it coming. Or, No one got hurt. Or, I'm different—this rule or law doesn't apply to me.* It'll make you crazy.

And that's what's happening. That's why Samson is obviously in ruin. He's lying in the lap of the weak one and he's in a death spiral. And almost anyone can see it, but Samson can't because sin will make you crazy.

Let's read what happens next. Delilah says, **"How can you say, 'I love you,' when you won't share your entire heart with me? You have deceived me these three times and have not told me the secret to your great strength."**

## Judges 16:16-17

**It came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death. <sup>17</sup> So he told her all that was in his heart and said to her, “A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I will become weak and be like any other man.”**

And then it says, **“It came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death.”** He could have left any time. **“So he told her all that was on his heart and said to her, ‘A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I will become weak like any other man.’”**

Do you remember in Numbers 6 when we talked about his hair? It’s called the hair of the consecration. And this is the last remnant of who Samson was supposed to be. And Samson right now is in the last choice of his life. He’s got to choose. Are you going to be separate to God and be holy? Or are you going to separate yourself to this Philistine maneater? And snip, snip, snip, and he’s a Nazirite no more.

He got his wish. Your wish comes true. If you want to be like all the other men, if you want to be a Philistine, then thy will be done, Samson. And there he lays.

### **Application: Know Thyself**

And see, the application here is to know thyself. Know thyself. You have to understand the power of the words “entice” and “seduce him.” It means to find an opening, to seek a vulnerability, to know your heel, Achilles. You’ve got to understand. Because the Philistines know your weakness. If you don’t, it doesn’t matter, because they do. The enemy knows our weakness. Do you? The Philistines went three for three, brawn to brawn, punch for punch, with Samson. It didn’t work for them. They lost thirty men, they lost a thousand men, they’re still trying to repair the gates. They realized, *You know what? Let’s just send in a cute little thing to entice him.* And they unraveled him every time.

This whole story—I hate it when passages come to life the same week. So, this week on Tuesday, it was a great day. It was my first week back, my first day back. And this e-mail goes

out to all the staff that Austin Disaster Relief Network wanted to show their appreciation to us. We've been serving them, volunteering and donating to them for forever. And so, they sent us six to ten boxes of Tiff's Treats ... I mean, fresh out of the oven. You could smell it down the street. It was just to thank us. So, there were chocolate chip cookies and snickerdoodles and then oatmeal raisin cookies. I mean, who even likes oatmeal raisin cookies? This guy. I like them a lot.

So, anyway, I got over there in time and there were still plenty of each kind, and I got me an oatmeal raisin on the way in and then on the way out. I was able to finish and have a second one on my way to lunch. I went to a ton of meetings, and then at 4:30 I'm done and I go downstairs to the workroom and the kitchen, and the boxes are mostly empty. There's not a chocolate chip cookie to be found—they're all gone. Two snickerdoodles. And almost every single oatmeal raisin cookies. I thought, *Well, the people have spoken, you know? I think God wants me to take these home.* So, all the boxes have is oatmeal raisin, so I put them all in one box together, and it's like it's a full box of oatmeal raisin. And I think, *I cannot take this box out of the office. It's too big. People are going to see me.* So, I went and got a Ziploc bag—true story—it's easier to hide—and put all the cookies in there. And I thought, *Really? You're going to take every single oatmeal raisin cookie?* So, I took two of them out. And I zipped it up. And I did not get out the threshold of that kitchen before I went back for the other two. I ate them fast, just because it was embarrassing. I went home and came in through the garage, so I left them in the laundry room, because it's kind of hot and we don't air condition that room, so that kept them kind of warm. I didn't have dinner that night. But I can't tell you how many times I looked for a reason to go in that laundry room. I mean, at some point Melinda said, "What are you doing in there?" "I'm not doing laundry, I'll tell you that."

It got so sad, that finally when I got down to three, I thought, *Dude, just call it, okay? Whatever they say, you do.* And they like milk. And so, I finally went outside to the kitchen table, sat down with a glass of milk, and did what I was told.

There's a point, I think, to this. One man's chocolate chip cookie is another man's oatmeal raisin. Do you know what your oatmeal raisin cookie is? Do you know where your heel is, Achilles? The Philistines do.

Peter doesn't mince words. He says, **“Wake up; be watchful. Your adversary the devil is roaming like a roaring lion and seeks to devour you.”** Sometimes all he has to do is set a trap of own passions and we'll walk right into his jaws.

Can I tell you two ways not to get eaten by your own passions? Let's do that—two applications—**two ways not to be eaten by our own appetites.**

## 1. Make a Decision

The first one is to make a decision. I mean, there's got to be a point in time when you say, *That's it, we're done. I'm breaking up with oatmeal raisin. I'm not doing this anymore. It keeps winning, I keep losing.*

### Romans 8:13

**For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**

And the Bible calls it mortification of the flesh—death of the flesh. Look how Paul writes it in Romans: **“If you're living according to the flesh, you must die.”** Just like that. **“But if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”** There's a lot of death in that passage. Kill or be killed, is what Paul just said. Kill or be killed. Mortification means you've got to kill those appetites and then keep killing them.

## 2. Remake the Decision Again and Again

Because the second part of conquering the appetites that are trying to destroy you is to make the decision again. Remake the decision again and again and again. Because this mortification of the flesh is like those zombie movies. I don't know—I don't watch those movies—but you know, where they shoot the thing, the Jason, or whatever the guy's name is. And then it's done, we can end this movie. And then he just pops back up when no one's looking. That's the appetites of the flesh. You shoot it, you kill it, you make that decision, and then you just keep making the decision. Might I add, will you kick this thing while it's down? Because sin can make you crazy. It'll harden your heart.

You've got to make a decision. This passage is interesting because you have to choose. Something's going to die here. If you choose not to choose or remain passive, your appetites, your passions, your anger, your lust, whatever it might be ... it says that you will die. Get in the cab with Samson and see where that leads.

Or it says, **“You will by the Spirit constantly be putting to death the passions of the flesh.”** And you cannot do this alone. Remember the Hebrews passage? Let's look more closely at the Hebrews passage. **“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”** How do you keep from the deceitfulness of sin from crouching over you? Look what it says—to exhort one another every day. So, we work together. We find people who can help exhort us so that we don't get hardened by the sin that we're so attracted to. Because one man's chocolate chip is another man's oatmeal. I can help you in that area and you can help me in my area. And that's why we get involved here.

And one of the reasons we meet is to find someone to exhort us. And if you really get trapped in something we have a ministry called Celebrate Recovery. It's glorious. It's for people who are trapped and are hurt or in a hang-up or habit. And they need special judo skills to be able to get out of it, and they work together that way. But it's mostly people coming together to exhort each other. That's how you do it. You make a decision and you keep making decisions.

### **The End of Samson's Story**

Let me tell you how this story ends. It's a warning of life. He's eating from a dead carcass, he's drinking all the wine he can get his hands on. And now all of God's plans for him are just lying on the floor. And the first thing that the Philistines do after he becomes like every other man is that they gouge his eyes out. *I don't want you gazing at our Philistine women any more.* The “little sun” is now living in complete darkness. He was blind to his weakness and now he's literally blind. He wasn't doing much for God, and now he's almost good for nothing. He's party entertainment for the Philistines.

## **Judges 16:23-25**

**Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, “Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand.”<sup>24</sup> And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, “Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us.”<sup>25</sup> And when their hearts were merry, they said, “Call Samson, that he may entertain us.” So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them.**

During a worship service to their god—looks what it says in chapter 16: **“Now the lords of the philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice.”** This breaks my soul here. **“And they said, ‘Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand.’ And when the people saw him, they praised their god. And they said, ‘Our god has given us our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us.’ And when their hearts were merry, they said, ‘Call Samson, that he may entertain us.’ And then Samson came out of the prison and he entertained them.”**

From judge to jester. He didn't know God; he didn't know himself.

I'll just keep reading: **“Then Samson called to the Lord and said, ‘O Lord God, please remember me and please give me the strength just this one last time, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my eyes.’** For his eyes—not for God's glory. **“And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other.”** You can read it for yourself.

## Judges 16:30

**And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines.” Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.**

**“And Samson said, ‘Let me die with the Philistines.’ Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.”**

You want to be like a Philistine? You can die like a Philistine. Thy will be done, Samson. And guess what? Thy will be done, God. God is sovereign. He was out to destroy the Philistines and He did it, with or without Samson’s commitment to the holiness of God and his Nazirite vow.

So, the last application. It’s the beginning of a new year for many people. We’ve got a calendar in our head, so let’s start over. How about today be the first day of the rest of your life? How about we take a Nazirite vow? Because Samson’s not a biography about a man; Samson is a biography about all mankind. “Oh mirror of our fickle state.”

Take a vow of holiness. Make a decision and then keep making that decision. You can follow the Nazirite outline. Stay away from all things unclean, anything that’s unclean, that’s not righteous and good. Just stay away from it. Away from, to dedicate yourself to the Lord and His holiness. Maybe literally, strong drink. Whatever ... insert your oatmeal raisin cookie there. I will separate myself from that.

Look, you might not even get a haircut. I’m not going to cut my hair for six weeks. (I’m in so much trouble for this one.) Maybe some kind of symbol that says, *I’m making a vow. I’m going to do this until it becomes a habit.*

I want you to seriously think about coming back next week. We’re going to start the Book of James. And James is a book that will teach us about how to know God and how to know ourselves and literally defines what a true faith is. And we can become a church of Nazirites. Because Samson’s story and drama is called a tragedy because it didn’t have to be. Any one of those story lines he could have stopped to change his trajectory. And I’m asking you, *Hey, you*

*want to start over? Do you want to start anew? You want to take a vow, make a decision, and keep making that? Let's make a decision to be holy. Let's start it with a prayer. Will you join me in that prayer?*

*Lord, I would ask that Your Spirit would speak to ours and that we would hear Your convictions about places we've played where we should have never been. Why were we in Gaza in the first place and the Valley of Sorek? And we stop and we wonder, Why do I keep failing? Because sin makes you crazy.*

*Lord, right now I see that, and I say, "Lord, I'd ask that You would help me to abstain and separate myself from the things that are not holy and will destroy me—not for my sake, but for Your glory." I'd ask that we would separate ourselves for Your holiness; that we'd be distinct away from the sludge of the culture, and that we would enjoy the presence of Your Spirit in our lives, that He might give us power.*

*Lord, I'd ask that You might make us a church of Nazirites, a church filled with people who enjoy the holiness of who we were meant to be for Your glory. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*