The Performance that Brought the House Down

Judges 16:21-31

Introduction:

13 cycles – 12 Judges – 7 Judges mentioned in some detail –

4 Judges discussed in great detail: Deborah and Barak (1), Gideon (6), Jephthah (2), Samson (4) – [See Charts].

Our last encounter with Samson was really sad.

He got involved with 3 women:

1. The one he wanted to marry – and may have.

2. A harlot in Gaza

3. A woman from the valley of Sorek, Delilah.

He played games with her about the source of his strength.

Finally she won the game and he lost:

His hair

His strength

His liberty

(And finally,)

His eyes.

His selfish downward steps can be traced: 16:20

1. His self-confidence “I will go out”.

2. His self-ignorance “did not know that the Lord ﻿﻿had departed from him.”

3. His self-weakness – unaware that he was weak.

4. His self-darkness – put out his eyes (16:21)

5. His self-bondage – in prison – (16:21)

6. His self-drudgery – became a grinder.

7. His self-humiliation – asked to put on a show. Little did they know!

I. The Result of Samson’s Sin – 16:21

“Then the Philistines took him and ﻿﻿put out his ﻿﻿eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.”

The price of sin is always:

Binding

Blinding

Grinding

It was so with Samson. He wanted a Philistine wife, who looked good to him, and he had his eyes gouged out.

He refused to discipline himself. Now his enemies disciplined him.

He went in to a prostitute in Gaza and escaped. Now he is a prisoner in Gaza.

He pursued Philistine women. Now he is doing the work of Philistine women.

Galatians 6:7

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for ﻿﻿whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

A long period of time may lapse between the two, but harvest time comes!

He had sown to the wind. Now he is reaping the whirlwind.

II. The Return of Samson’s Strength – “His Hair Began to Grow” – 16:22

We know that Samson’s strength was not in his hair, but it was connected to it. He had an inward connection with God, symbolized by his hair.

When that connection was broken, he let his hair be cut and lost his strength. When that connection was restored, his hair began to grow back. At least the writer sees a connection.

[And who is the writer?]

So, the statement that “his hair began to grow” is significant -- In his weakness and humility he had confessed his sin. How do I know? That’s what it takes to be forgiven by a holy God (I John 1:9).

The moment he confessed his sin, he was forgiven.

However, Samson is still in prison and he is still blind. His service for the Lord had stopped. He is receiving ridicule, and so is his God.

One writer said that we should not over-stress the Grace of God. He meant well, but what he should have said is, “we should stress the Grace of God, but we need to stress the whole story that sin has a history of its own.

It may be that God will not allow a pastor, who falls into immorality, to continue to be a pastor. That does not mean that God won’t use him somewhere else.

In order for this to happen, God may have to re-train him:

In relation to God

In relation to people

In relation to a new ministry

Samson lived a life of disobedience, and he died a death of regret.

III. The Ridicule of Samson’s Faith - “A Victory Celebration” – 16:23-25

A. The “Lords of the Philistines”

“Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to ﻿﻿Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said: “Our god has delivered into our hands Samson our enemy!”

Where have we seen them before? (Chapter 16 five times)

Had Dagon, the fish-god, delivered Samson for them?

[Matthew Henry calls Dagon a dunghill-Deity]

No, they had schemed with Delilah. Make a sacrifice to her!

B. The People – 16:24

“When the people saw him, they ﻿﻿praised their god; for they said: ‘Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy, the destroyer of our land, and the one who multiplied our dead.”

They believed the same thing. Why?

They drank the kool-aid. They believed what their “lords” said.

C. The Performance -16:25

“So it happened, when their hearts were ﻿﻿merry, that they said, “Call for Samson that he may perform for us.” So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them.”

In this act they were not only defaming Samson, they were also defaming his God.

This is Jehovah’s champion. Our god has beaten him.

Their Conclusion: Our god (Dagon) is greater than their God.(Jehovah)

All of this is caused by Samson’s great sin.

Romans 2:24

“For ﻿﻿*“the name of God is* ﻿﻿blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,”

The more visible we are in the Lord’s service, the more damage we do with our hypocrisy.

Samson was God’s most visible representative of his time.

There were 5 or 6 thousand Gentiles who were given reason to blaspheme Jehovah.

It happens today on a large stage, and on a small stage

IV. The Request of Samson’s Prayer – 16:26-28

A. The Setting – 16:26-27

“Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, “Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them.” Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines *were* there—about three thousand men and women on the ﻿﻿roof watching while Samson performed.”

B. The Prayer

“Then Samson called to the Lord, saying, “O Lord God, ﻿﻿remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one *blow* take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!”

V. The Revenge on Samson’s Enemies – 16:29-30

A. The Preparation of the Plan – 16:29

“And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left.”

They think he is harmless, because he is in chains and because he is blind.

B. The Execution of the Plan – 16:30

"Then Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he pushed with *all his* might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who *were* in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.

The strength that he lost by sin, he regained by prayer.

He sinned against God.

He confessed to God.

He was restored by God.

He ministered for God.

He killed more in his death than in his life.

* In his life - we know that he had killed 1000, then 30 and probably many more.
* In his death – He killed 3,000 on the roof (v.27);

Probably at least that many inside, “the lords and their guests”.

It is never too late to turn to God in confession and be used even more than in all of your life.

VI. The Review of Samson’s Life – 16:31

﻿ “And his brothers and all his father’s household came down and took him, and brought *him* up and ﻿﻿buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah.

He had judged Israel ﻿﻿twenty years.

Samson is the only Judge who fought alone. He seems to have said, “If no one else will do it, I will”

He failed in many ways, but in the end he was successful.

He ended his life on an upward note.

He is honored in the “Hall of Faith” (Hebrews 11)

He ended where he had started

Judges 13:25

“And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at ﻿﻿Mahaneh Dan ﻿﻿between Zorah and ﻿﻿Eshtaol.

In between, he was like so many in his day: As expressed in Judges 17:6 and 21:25

“In those days *there was* no king in Israel; ﻿﻿everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

Conclusion:

That’s Samson and that’s the Judges.

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. (“Tale of Two Cities” Charles Dickens)

1. There some things we will always remember:

Ehud and his left-handed dagger

Deborah’s song expressing thanks for God’s deliverance.

Gideon’s 300 men.

Samson’s great power.

2. There are other things we would like to forget:

Samson’s defeat

Barack’s timid spirit

Gideon’s back-sliding

But Note: The authors of all of these forgettable things are all in God’s

hall of faith.

But more important question is: What will we take away from the

Judges?

1. God uses all sorts of people.

2. God gives the power to perform.

3. We can learn from their defeats as well as their victories.

4. God judges each one individually.

“Your work is my work; Our work is God’s work.”

The last line is fine; the first line is flawed.

“Your work is not my work; My work is not your work.”

5. God does the judging.

To his own master he stands or falls.

Let us allow the Holy Spirit to apply these principles to our lives in all of the days we have left to serve Him.

