

Hall of Shame – Samson – Judges 13-16

As a senior in high school, I bought a '67 Ford Mustang fastback with a 289. Beautiful car. Bright red. Arrest-me Red. It was shiny and beautiful and it just looked fast. But I never raced it. Never hot-rodded it. I babied it. I kept it in the garage with a car cover on it. When it needed parts, I bought the best parts, you know, with the lifetime warranty. I washed it every week and waxed it every month – by hand. Only used the best gas. I loved that car. And it hated me. It broke down every chance it got. It never failed to leave me stranded at the worst possible opportunities. I took a pretty girl on a date and she wound up having to call a friend to come get her. I went to a car show and when I went to leave it just wouldn't start. I drove it to a job interview. Never got there. Even the day I sold it, it broke down. Seriously, I drove it to a swap meet and a guy immediately bought it for what I was asking. He paid me cash and I gave him the title and as I moved it over to where he wanted it, the power steering hose blew. That car had so much potential but the only thing you could rely on it doing was messing up.

I have an idea the parents of Samson thought something similar about their son. He had so much potential but the only thing you could count on him to do was mess up. He was chosen by God to be a Nazirite which meant to be separate and different – holy – to God. Jesus Himself showed up as a Christophany to tell his parents about his birth and to explain to them that Samson was to never drink wine or other strong drink. He was to never touch anything dead. And he was to never cut his hair. And it says that God raised him up and blessed him to be a judge, a leader, of the nation of Israel. But even as a young man, Samson started making bad choices.

Now, when you think of Samson, what do you think of? You think of a big, strong, muscular fellow, right? Like Schwarzenegger with a yarmulke (the little Jewish hat thing). But I don't believe he was built like that at all. It was God that gave him **supernatural** strength not **natural** muscles. I believe he looked like anybody else in that day, just with very long hair. I was waiting in line at the DMV the other day and was admiring the beautiful hair of the lady in front of me until she turned around and it was a guy! And I was a little bit jealous. So, Samson had it going on. He was known for his strength and for his long hair but spiritually...he was ugly. And it started when he was a young man.

You know, of all the 10 Commandments, there is one that I think rarely gets taken completely seriously. And that is the fifth commandment to honor your father and your mother. As kids, we didn't take it seriously because our parents were so dumb and they didn't understand, right? And now, as adults, we believe our kids should honor us but the statute of limitations is up for us to honor our parents. But what is the promise that goes with that command? If you do it, you will live a long life.

Look first at **Judges chapter 14**. We will skip over and see several verses about Samson this morning. As you turn there, remember that Samson's parents are godly people who know that God has a call on Samson's life, not just for the sake of Samson but for the whole nation of Israel. It tells us in **chapter 13 verse 5** that God intended to use Samson to free the Israelites from the oppression of the Philistines. This is rather hard to read as Samson dishonors his parents. But the one thing I keep thinking about as I read through the life of Samson – and it's a comfort to me – is that when God chose you for your calling, He already factored in your rebellion, your ignorance, your lack of training and even your stupidity. Let's read where it started for Samson in chapter **14, verses 1-4**.

Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. ²When he returned, he said to his father and mother, "I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife." ³His father and mother

replied, “Isn’t there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among all our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?” But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me. She’s the right one for me.”⁴ (His parents did not know that this was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel.)

Now, how many of you are thinking that if you had talked to your parents that way, you wouldn’t be sitting here today? It was the custom for parents to find a mate for their child in this culture and to make the necessary arrangements with the other parents for that to happen. But Samson breaks tradition and goes and finds his own wife and the worst part is that she is a Philistine – one of the enemies of Israel. The story of Samson’s life, especially this part about him dishonoring his parents, could be encouraging for some people or discouraging to others. It should be motivating either way but some people may see this scene and see their own kid and think they have messed up as parents and that you have doomed your kids. And others may see this and feel comforted by the fact that you aren’t the first parents to mess up.

But let me encourage you by saying that you can be great parents and have kids that turn out terrible and you can be terrible parents and have kids that turn out well. The choice is ultimately up to the kid. Most parents do their absolute best at what is the hardest job in the world but after the average kid is an older teenager, the choices he or she makes are on them. Samson had everything in the world going for him but he dishonored his parents, made bad choices, paid the price and his life was cut short.

He not only dishonored his parents but he also dishonored his promise. Look at **chapter 14** now. Remember, Samson was born to be a Nazirite, one who is set apart and different from the others. He wasn’t supposed to drink wine, touch anything dead or cut his hair. But on his way to get married and during the wedding feast in **chapter 14**, Samson breaks at least one of those promises and probably two of them. But this is also where the story really starts to get good. At least that was my opinion when I was ten and wanted to be strong like Samson. First, as he’s on his way to get married, a lion jumps out at him and it says that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and Samson tore it apart with his bare hands. That’s pretty amazing but it gets better.

So, next, Samson is at the weeklong wedding feast and tells all the men a riddle. He tells them if they can figure it out, he will pay them 30 changes of clothes. But if they can’t, they owe him 30 changes of clothes. I have to skip over some details to give you the action. Anyway, the men can’t figure it out so they threaten his bride-to-be and she manages to get the answer out of him and she tells the Philistine men. As you can imagine, Samson gets mad because now he has to pay up so he walks 20 miles to another town, kills 30 men, takes their clothes and pays off the bet. Look at **chapter 14, verse 19**. *“Then the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of everything and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. Burning with anger, he returned to his father’s home.”* Again, pretty amazing but it gets better.

To get vengeance on the Philistines, Samson catches 300 foxes and ties their tails together with a burning torch between them and burns down all their crops. If I ever caught one fox, I’d never quit talking about it. But he caught 300 and tied their tails together. That sounds like something out of a Popeye cartoon! But it’s true because God gave him the strength and ability to do it. Then he kills 1,000 Philistine men with the jawbone of a donkey. I’m telling you. The guy was like John Wick and Popeye and Superman all rolled into one. But the reason I tell you all that is to show that he dishonored his promise not to touch anything dead. I’m pretty sure he was drinking at the wedding feast too and that was against the Nazirite rules but we don’t know for sure. But he did touch dead people and a dead lion and for him that was a sin.

Has God ever told you that something was a sin for you to do but you look around and other Christians seem to be doing it without a problem? Maybe it's drinking or smoking or listening to certain kinds of music. You know what it is for me? Speeding. I used to drive fast everywhere I went. And I paid for a lot of speeding tickets too. But God made it clear to me that 60 mph means 60 mph. Not even 61. For me, that's a sin because God showed me that He has protected me for all those years when I was speeding and I'm not to do it anymore.

Maybe God brought you out of alcoholism. If He did that for you, then how dare you ever take a drink again. But sometimes God calls us to be holy – different – because He knows that somebody is watching us and if they saw us do something it might trigger them to do it and they might have a problem with it that we don't even have. So just like Samson should have honored his promise to God, we should honor what God has called us to do or not do. And to dishonor that is sin.

So, Samson has so far dishonored his parents, dishonored his promise and in **chapter 16** we see that he also dishonors his purity. The chapter starts off by saying that Samson visited a prostitute but then sometime later fell madly in lust with a woman named Delilah. They never got married but were evidently living like it. And what's the real problem with that, right? I mean everybody does it nowadays. Even people that say they are Christians shack up and live together without ever having a wedding. Is that even really a sin anymore?

In 2019, Pew Research found that 58 percent of white evangelicals approve of cohabitation if the couple plans to marry. (www.crosswalk.com/family/marriage/christians-and-cohabitation-what-you-need-to-know.html, accessed 9/15/21). Well, despite current trends that approve of living together, the Bible's message stays the same: God forbids sex before marriage. **Hebrews 13:4** says, *"Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."* Sexual immorality is defined as sex with anybody that is not your spouse.

God wants a wedding for the same reason He wants you to be baptized as a Christian. In both situations, you are standing before your family, your friends, the world and God Himself and saying, *"I'm with Him. There is no other for me for life. I am committed and devoted to this one. Period."* If you can't say that about the person you are about to live with then you have no business living with them. It's a sin. Don't do it. Samson did it and paid the price. Because of Delilah and his dishonoring of his purity, Samson died early. Because of his dishonoring of his promise, Samson died early. Because of his dishonoring of his parents, Samson died early, just like the 5th commandment says.

Samson did everything he could to ruin his life. He was selfish, rash, violent, and prideful and do you know what? I want to show you something. God's word does not come back void. The word given to Samson's parents by Jesus before Samson was born was that Samson would, as it says in **13:5**, *"begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines."*

Now, turn to **chapter 16**. Samson was captured by the Philistines, had his eyes gouged out and his head was shaved and he was made to grind grain in prison like an animal. And while he was in prison, the Philistines had a party to celebrate and to worship their false god. Now, how long do you think God is going to allow that to happen? It's happening today but God won't put up with it for much longer. Look at what happens in **Judges 16:23-30**.

Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, "Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands."

²⁴When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, “Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the one who laid waste our land and multiplied our slain.”

²⁵While they were in high spirits, they shouted, “Bring out Samson to entertain us.” So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. When they stood him among the pillars, ²⁶Samson said to the servant who held his hand, “Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.” ²⁷Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. ²⁸Then Samson prayed to the Lord, “Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.” ²⁹Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, ³⁰Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.

The whole purpose of Samson’s life was to deliver his people from the Philistines. And Samson had squandered his potential and dishonored everything that God had given him. And he paid the price for it with an early death. But as I have said before, God’s will is going to be done. You can get on board with it and be obedient and you will be blessed and live a full and abundant life or you can rebel and dishonor God and waste your potential and pay the price for it. But God’s will is going to be done.

This is just another illustration of BOOCOD. There are Blessings Of Obedience and Consequences Of Disobedience. BOOCOD. Can you imagine how the life of Samson could have been different if he had honored his parents? He might have gotten married to the right woman and had kids and left a great legacy. If he had honored his promise to be a Nazirite and be set apart and different he would have made a great judge and led the people of Israel to be blessed as well. And if he had honored his purity and waited for marriage he could have been blessed.

I like how the Living Bible says in **1 Corinthians 6:18**, “Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body.” But Satan is such a liar. He never tells a young girl that if she sacrifices her purity at the altar of some boy’s lust that she might wind up pregnant and alone. He never mentions to the high school boy that there is a good chance he will wind up with a disease or paying child support to a woman he doesn’t love for 18 years. No, Satan just says everybody is doing it. Nobody will find out. It’ll be fun. It’s what adults do. Go for it. He never mentions the consequences of disobedience.

But the good news is that God can and will forgive even the sexually immoral. God can and will forgive those who have dishonored Him and squandered their lives and their gifts. God is a God of second chances and third and fourth. God is a God of restoration and renewal and rebirth. He would much rather show His blessings than allow you to suffer your consequences.

But where there is sin, there are consequences. And the longer that sin goes unconfessed, the worse the consequences get. So, if you are like me and Samson and you have dishonored God in any way, let today be the day you repent of those sins, turn away from that lifestyle and ask God to forgive you and to cleanse you and He is faithful to do just that.

Do you have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus? Do it today and allow Him to come into your life and change you and make you more like Him every day. Then honor Him with your life and enjoy His blessings for all eternity. Do it right now as the music plays.