

Topic	Samson, The Final Judgement
Reference	Judges 16
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As a young man, growing up, Samson was my Bible hero. If you go to Sunday School, most of the kids will say, there hero is Samson. You have always wanted, if I had all the money and all the strength, life would be different. Here you actually have a story of a man who actually had it all, fantastic pedigree, chosen by God. Before he was born, his mother was barren, and spirit ministered to her and she had a baby and that's him. He had a bright future, God had sent him apart with a Nazarite Vow. Then you see how his supernatural strength was used and see how he conducts his life.

BACKGROUND: Judges is basically a story of the total failure of Israel. We look at each judge, battling evil. We go down to Gideon, Jephthah, Samson. As you go, each one down the line, you find that it gets worse and worse. The judges get worse and worse in terms on their character and the last thing, 17-21, it really becomes bad. So, this is the context.

There are three lessons I want us to take home today:

- A. **Success is seductive:** It leaves God out
- B. **Idolatry is addictive:** It never lets you go
- C. **Redemption is available:** God is faithful even when we are faithless

A. SUCCESS IS SEDUCTIVE: IT LEAVES GOD OUT

Judges 16:1-3 (ESV) Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and he went in to her. **2** The Gazites were told, "Samson has come here." And they surrounded the place and set an ambush for him all night at the gate of the city. They kept quiet all night, saying, "Let us wait till the light of the morning; then we will kill him." **3** But Samson lay till midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts, and pulled them up, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron.

Now at the first glance, you thought that this is really nothing very much, but actually it is very significant. Here you actually have Samson, again if you look back at the last two chapters, the first thing that he does after the spirit comes

on him, it says he goes down to the Philistines land and he saw this woman who was not an Israelite and he wanted to take as his wife. Now it goes right into the middle of enemy territory and he saw a prostitute and went there to have sex with her.

So, this is a guy who is led by his impulses and you will find that he has got all the success. He is not thinking very much about his mission in God. In fact, if you look at Samson in the chapter before, he has one of his greatest victories. He has taken one donkey bone and with one donkey bone he has killed 1000 Philistines and arranged them all in the hill. He gave it a name. Here we actually have a song. So, some of the judges have songs after their victories. This is Samson's song

Judges 15:16 With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey have I struck down a thousand men."

Now you compare that to Deborah's song.

Judges 5:2-5 (ESV) That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly, bless the Lord! **3** "Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes; to the Lord I will sing; I will make melody to the Lord, the God of Israel. **4** "Lord, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped yes, the clouds dropped water. **5** The mountains quaked before the Lord, even Sinai before the Lord, the God of Israel.

There is a very big difference between the two songs. From one judge couple of chapters later on, you have Samson, basically attributing his success to himself. Success is a little bit seductive.

Judges 15:17 (ESV) As soon as he had finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone out of his hand. And that place was called Ramath-lehi.

Actually, there was no hill there. The hill was made out of the pile of bodies. So, this is extolling his own virtues. Then

Judges 15:18 (ESV) And he was very thirsty, and he called upon the Lord and said, "You have granted this great salvation by the hand of your servant, and shall I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?"

He is actually thirsty, he is like there is no water here and the way he asks God for help is a little bit scary. Are you going to let me die? It sounds like as if God owes him salvation as it were. It is a little bit arrogant. Then

Judges 15:19-20 (ESV) And God split open the hollow place that is at Lehi, and water came out from it. And when he drank, his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore, the name of it was called **En-hakkore**; it is at Lehi to this day. **20** And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

The name 'En-hakkore' means the spring of the caller. So, the benefit goes to the caller, not the one who provides the water. This actually tells you the psyche of Samson. He begins to think the success is due to him, that is his personal ability to call upon the power, like God was his genie and he turns up whenever he needs him as it were.

This is how people use to name places.

- Genesis 22:14 (ESV) So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; (**Jehovah Jireh**) as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."
- Genesis 28:19 (ESV) He called the name of that place Bethel (House of God), but the name of the city was Luz at the first
- Genesis 32:30 (ESV) So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel (The Face of God), saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.

So, every time you have a spiritual experience, the patriarchs always named the place after God. Here we have Samson naming it after himself. Here you actually have Samson

- Driven by sensual pleasure
- He believes that he is invulnerable. His success has gone to his head. So that he thinks that whatever happens, he will be invulnerable.
- He becomes reckless. He spends more and more of his time in enemy's territory.
- Here there is no mention, when he does all this thing, there is no mention of the spirit. If you look before in the past in chapter 14 and 15

Judges 14:19 ¹⁹ And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town

Judges 15:14 ¹⁴ When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands.

You can find a ditch in chapter 16, the entire chapter 16, you don't see the narrator putting the spirit anymore. He is like going on his own battery, but he thinks the petrol is still on. This is what success will do to you, overconfidence. Daniel Kahneman who is actually winner of the Nobel Prize in economic actually says

overconfidence "the most significant of the cognitive biases."

We are all biased to some extent but overconfidence causes huge biasness. In fact, the CEOs are particularly prone to overconfidence. They attribute success to their own brilliance and neglect the role of circumstance or good fortune." In Samson's case, he neglects the role of the spirit.

There are three faces of overconfidence, which we can see in his life.

1. Psychologically. there is overestimation which means you always think you are better than what you are.
2. Over placement. You always think you are better than other people.
3. Over precision. This means whatever you believe is the truth. Everybody else is living a lie.

That is the problem of biasness which he actually has in his life. You can see that in so many people. Look at David's life, it was tumultuous. At the height of his power, instead of going off to war in spring where most kings does he stays at home. When he stays at home, he spots a beautiful woman bathing and that was the beginning of his downfall.

Here we actually have Samson, he defeats every single Philistine attack, but he underestimates a woman. They say behind every successful man is a woman and behind every failure is also a woman. So, woman is everywhere, you cannot escape them.

Every single disaster, you actually trace back, it is always due to overconfidence, whether it is titanic, the ship that God could even sink or the challenger or Chernobyl or Deep-Water Horizon in Atlantic Ocean, each of them if you trace back it is due to overconfidence.

So therefore, success is seductive because once you get success then you look into all these sorts of books to basically build on your success, your confidence and we tend to leave God out. That's the danger of success. If you look at

churches, successful and unsuccessful churches. There are two churches in Asia Minor, one is Laodicea, big mega church and Jesus rebukes them

Revelation 3:17-18 (ESV) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing,

That's the whole problem, when you are rich, you are prospered, you need nothing, which means it is seductive success. You leave God out and God says to them

not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

Riches and success blind us. There is also a little church, struggling to survive, the Philadelphia church and it says,

Revelation 3:8 (ESV) 'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

A little church, not much success, they have little power but they have remained faithful. Success is seductive. Look at 1-Cor chapter 10, Paul talks to the Corinthian church, a very successful church as it were, with a lot of gifts. He tells them about the reason of their downfall is spiritual success

1 Corinthians 10:1-5 (ESV) For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, **2** and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, **3** and all ate the same spiritual food, **4** and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. **5** Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Spiritual success is a problem when you begin to depend upon them. There was as true story of a man. He read the New York Times when he was 18 months of age. He read Greek and learned Latin at 3 years of age. By 6, he spoke seven languages. He passed entrance exam MIT by 8 years and Harvard by 9 years but had to wait until 11 in order to enter Harvard University and he graduated at 16. When he graduated, he was already a tutor. His IQ was 250-300 and Einstein's IQ was only 200. His name was William Silas. He died at 44 years as an obscure clerk in a New York office. You would have thought for a man like

that with so much talent, with so much potential had done something isn't it, but the trouble is someone said

Success does not depend on what God gives you but what you do with it, failure comes when you depend on it

Failure comes when you depend on your past success as what he did and we do hear the same idea of success being taught by many churches. Bishop David Oyedepo says,

That means, every child of God is a candidate for wealth and by redemption, has an inheritance of financial fortune in Christ. This establishes that redemption is our gateway to financial fortune. However, God empowers us for wealth through the revelation and application of the covenant. This is because the revelation of the Word is the gateway to a world of unlimited breakthroughs.

What he is doing here is subtly using the covenant for his own purposes or own purposes of financial wealth, as if blessings can be bought. If you go back to Acts chapter 8 when there was this guy, Simon who was interacting with apostles

Acts 8:18-21 (ESV) 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, **19** saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." **20** But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! **21** You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God

So we come to a kind of state of Christianity where we are not interested in the heart, we are interested in the blessing and somehow blessing can be bought, God can be bribed as it were. John Piper writes in his book called Don't Waste Your Life. It says

The health, wealth, and prosperity "gospel" swallows up the beauty of Christ in the beauty of his gifts and turns the gifts into idols. The world is not impressed when Christians get rich and say thanks to God. They are impressed when God is so satisfying that we give our riches away for Christ's sake and count it as gain

No point in going on and telling all that how God has blessed you, you got a big house, you went for holidays here and there, the world is not impressed. In fact, the world is jealous. The world is impressed when Christian's find God so satisfying that we give it away for Christ's sake as it were. I think when we depend on success, we go into a state of what we call functional atheism.

This is the unconscious, unexamined conviction that if anything decent is going to happen here, we are the ones who must make it happen.

Ken Lay died in 2001. It was one of the biggest bankruptcies in American history at Enron. He was the chairman. He was actually son of a Baptist preacher. He was a devout Christian as it were. But it was functional atheism, because church was in one corner of his life, corporate life was another. He totally separated it. He acted as if there was no God. Success got into his brain. In fact, he started cheating and he actually deprived 1000s and 1000s of people of their life savings when the whole company went under.

B. IDOLATRY IS ADDICTIVE: IT NEVER LETS YOU GO

Judges 16:4 (ESV) After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 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. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver

Here you actually have a woman in the valley of Sorek. Her name is Delilah. The Philistines are at their wizeded, they cannot capture him any other way. Every time they try it, they have failed. So now they try to bribe this woman with 1100 pieces of silver from each one is a huge money. This sort of amount belongs of kings. The Philistines were not able to found it about the strength of Samson. That's why they want to find out what is his secret. There must be some secret because he looks so ordinary outside. Then there are three failed attempts where he tricks the woman. She says darling please tell me how do we capture you and all that. He says,

1. 7 fresh bow strings- tendons not yet dried
2. New rope
3. Weave 7 locks of hear in web fastened with pin

Every time they come and try to capture him, he just tears it apart.

Judges 16:15 (ESV) And she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where your great strength lies."

Now here she applies the oldest trick and the most powerful trick in a woman's armamentarium. Priyanka Chopra got married recently and this is what she says about her marriage to Nick Jonas

"What is happening? I've not known myself like this," she told Vogue. "This guy turned me into such a girl! If I could blush, I'd be tomato red right now."

Nick Jonas brother Joe Jonas writes,

"I think she kind of knocked him off his feet. He was just this little puppy dog,"

Science and technology university in China actually identifies, when you are in love, the prefrontal cortex of your brain lights up. That's the part that controls reward, motivation, emotion and social function. So, something actually happens to your hormones kick in, the part of your brain kicks in when you actually in love.

Donatella Marazziti of University of Pisa describes the three E's of being of love,

1. **Euphoria**, which means you are walking on cloud 9, you are bulletproof exactly like Samson. He is bulletproof.
2. **Endangered**, that means you take risk, it doesn't matter what the girl is like, what kind of family she is like, she could be a drug addict, it doesn't matter, you love her.
3. **Exhausted**.

I believe Samson is addicted to love. You know, why, because he is in denial. Imagine, you tell the girl your secret. The next moment 15 thugs turn up in your room with swords and then you have to fight them off and you ask her, how come 15 thugs in my room. She says, it is nothing, they are my brothers. So, you minimize the problem. Another time it happens, another 20 thugs come and then you rationalize it. Maybe those are her cousins. The last one is self-deception. She really loves me right and she deceives.

These are all signs of addiction. In fact psychologist have marked out certain signs which we can see in this passage of addiction

- Seeking the partner compulsively. Every time he had spare time, he goes to Gazza. He goes to see Delilah. He probably would have sung songs about Delilah.
- Find it hard to be happy without your partner
- Feel empty inside when apart
- Panic at the thought of losing partner
- Thrive off partners approval. That's why in the end he told her the secret.

- Her love is his drug
- More concerned about receiving love than giving it

Love addiction is actually not uncommon and then you look at these verses, the author describes her leverage. Every time it doesn't work out, she says,

- Judges 16:10 (ESV) Then Delilah said to Samson, "Behold, you have mocked me and told me lies. Please tell me how you might be bound.
- Judges 16:13 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound."
- Judges 16:15 (ESV) And she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where your great strength lies."

What she is doing is conflating two issues. Loving her has got nothing to do about telling his greatest weakness. The two issues are unrelated, but she is conflating them and he doesn't see that. So, he has actually become very-very stupid because of his addiction.

Judges 16:16-17 (ESV) And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death.

This means he is very distressed.

17 And he told her all his heart, and said to her, "A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man." **18** When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up again, for he has told me all his heart." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. **19** She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him.

The last bit of addiction is that partners of love addiction are usually emotionally unavailable, they are manipulative, and they are abusive. The moment she strangled him, she tormented him. Which means, she never loved him. She used him, which is a sad part. He became putty in her hands. Love addiction is defined as a compulsive, chronic craving and/or pursuit of romantic love in an effort to get our sense of security and worth from another person."

Strangely enough, the strongest person in the world has insecurities. The strongest person in the world has such a deep need for security and worth that he has to seek it from Delilah and Delilah alone. Be careful, you look strong on outside but inside there is a particular need that must be met by that particular woman. Here you actually have the whole story of Samson is a tug of war. On one hand, there is his calling, on the other hand he has a desire. His calling is to be the judge of Israel, a vow to be a Nazarite where he is to be dedicated to God. He should not be in contact with dead animals. The first thing happens, the lion dies and there is honey and he comes to the dead body and he takes the honey out because he is too hungry. He takes the jawbone, which is also a dead animal's anatomical part and uses that to kill 1000 people. He tells Delilah, the way to basically overpower me is to use 7 tendons or bowstrings, which is basically dead bodies. He actually trifles with his Nazarite vow. Every time, in his tug between serving God and serving himself, he always goes to this particular area which is himself.

We always find some way to fill that inner emptiness. Our desires are all focus on that and basically our desires are for love and care, honor, respect, power, happiness, satisfaction and security. There is nothing wrong with those desires. I don't think there is anything wrong for Samson to be in love. In fact, if you look at Genesis chapter 2, it describes a beautiful situation in the Garden of Eden where God planted a garden,

Genesis 2:8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. **9** And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.

That means God is interested in satisfaction and happiness.

The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **10** A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. **11** The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. **12** And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.

God is showering man with all the things that will fulfil your desires, nothing wrong with desires, nothing wrong in falling in love, nothing wrong in wanting happiness, but the trouble is the fall. When the fall comes, and the man is chased out of Garden of Eden, instead of love and care he feels unloved, uncared. Instead of honor and respect, there is shame and unworthiness. Instead of power, he feels inadequate and incapable, incompetent. Instead of

happiness, he gets discontentment and sadness. Instead of security, we have insecurity and anxiety.

That is the situation of fall and ever since you get out of the Garden of Eden, we try to fulfil those desires by building our own world. Our own world without God. The tower of Babylon is an emblematic of man creating their own world of life partner, jobs, family and leisure. So that those desires can ultimately be fulfilled. If you look at the relationship between Delilah and Samson, it is a transactional relationship. You know why, he is looking to her for love, sexual satisfaction, self-esteem because she makes him feel good, but she is not genuine.

Samson is actually using her, and she is not the only woman in his life, she is the third woman. The first was his wife, the second was a prostitute and Delilah was the third. He is using her, and Delilah was smart, and she uses him. She wants money, prestige, defeating the powerful Israelite judge and she wants power.

So, there is a transactional relationship which we see very much in life itself where man and woman use each other. Once they are addicted, it is like an idol. David Foster Wallace is one of the most influential and innovative writers of the last twenty years and he is a non-Christian. He has been addicted to everything under the sun; woman, drugs, money. He actually admitted,

If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you

Because whatever you worship, there will never be enough. So therefore, your desires cannot be fulfilled by yourself. So therefore, we live in a world that tantalizes it. It is trying to entice us with all our desires, to fulfil our desires for love and care, honor and respect, because this is how the devil tries to move us along in that direction. It is like creating needs. This is what marketeers write

What marketeers now do is to hypnotize the customer and turn it into a real need, satisfy it and eventually create another need by introducing another product or rejuvenating the current product

Why do you need to buy an i-phone every year?

The same one works, it tells you the time, it tells you the calendar and next year there is another phone and another phone and another phone. Again, you are

not meeting needs, you are creating needs, because we are a society tap into the fulfilment of desires and that's what Samson was into. We Malaysians are the fattest in Southeast Asia. Why, because, our society is driven by desire. So, remember addiction is going to be a problem. We are a society, we need to recognize that we are driven by desire. We are seduced by success.

C. REDEMPTION IS AVAILABLE: GOD IS FAITHFUL EVEN WHEN WE ARE FAITHLESS

Judges 16:19-20 Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." But he did not know that the Lord had left him

It is just a sad situation that when he woke up and he found himself bound, he started to break free and said like, just like I have done so many times, I will do so again, because now he is operating under his own strength and he didn't even realize that the Lord had left him. That is the saddest and most frightening part of this passage. When God has left him, he didn't even know. Many of us worship in church for a long time, far from God and you go through all the emotions and you may have left God already, you don't even realize. Because backsliding and spiritual apostasy is something so hidden, you cannot see it.

In fact, God allowed this to come upon samson because God is faithful and here you have Samson have his eyes grouched out. The reason why he has his eyes grouched out and his strength taken away is simply because the loss of sight, because he lived his life by sight, loss of strength because he lived his life by his gifts, not for their purpose. So, every time he goes, he gets in trouble, you know why, he open his eyes. He went to Timnah, he saw the daughter of Philistine. He went to Gaza, he saw a prostitute. He saw Delilah and he fell in love. So therefore, sin has its consequences. So, if you live your life by sight, the consequence is that he lost his sight. He lived his life by his strength and by the consequence of this strength given to him for the use to rule Israel, instead he lost it.

So therefore, he is in jail. He has reduced to a big clown. He is threshing grain. He is in deep strive and then Samson must have repented because he called to Lord. Only two times he calls to the Lord. If you look in this whole passage, 3 chapters, once when he is going to die of thirst, he calls to the Lord in the middle of desert and the second time is when he is in the bowls of dungeon. He has reduced to being ridicule as a clown, living his life blind and he actually calls up to God.

Judges 16:28 Then Samson called to the LORD and said, "O Lord ¹GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."

Here we have a picture of a wasted life. He was specially chosen. There were only three other woman, Sarah, Rebecca, Hannah, infertile womb, God brought a special baby out. He was specially consecrated with a Nazarite vow. He was specially empowered, but he never took his calling seriously. His whole life is about fulfilling his desires, it was never about the calling. The truth of the matter is, Samson's life is actually the mirror of the society in which he lived. Israel when they were in trouble with the Philistines, never even bother to call back to the Lord to repent, never even call for help of God. Every other time, if you look at other judges, Israel will call out to God. This time Israel is so deep into secularism that they don't even realize they are in trouble. They never call out. Actually, Samson's is a mere image of his own society, a wasted life. Specially chosen, specially consecrated and specially empowered but you never take your calling seriously. That's the same with us. We are chosen before, predestined, elected before the foundation of the world, put here for a particular purpose, but many of us are living wasted lives because we never take our calling seriously. We serve him when it is convenient. We will go when there is food, but we are not willing to sacrifice, you know why, because all we are doing every single time is fulfilling our desires. When we see, we take, we like and that's an indictment.

We live in a society that is not very much different from Samson's and we need to wake up to that. The society is in us. We cannot keep on living just fulfilling our desires. God works around our flaws. We see how God is using Samson to defeat the Philistines, but he does it in a way that is very different. He never fought a battle, he never led an army against the Philistines. He never led a single battle. God has to work around Samson's agenda. When Samson is free then God has a chance to work.

- Philistines pressure wife to betray, Samson kills 30 men for their clothes
- Wife given to best man, Samson burns grainfields and orchards
- Philistines kill wife, Samson attacks Philistines
- Judahites hand him over, Samson kills 1000 with jaw
- Philistines surround him in Gaza, Samson carries gate away
- Delilah Betrays Samson, Samson crashes temple kills 3000

God still fulfils his purpose by attacking the Philistines, but it has to be around Samson's flaws. It is wonderful how God can even use flawed heroes. Look at

the power of God. In Deborah and Barak, God used 10,000 men, a fraction of a people of Israel. Gideon, 300 and Samson, only 1. In any situation, the hero is God. The hero is not Samson, the hero is God and here you actually have Hebrews chapter 11

Hebrews 11:32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions...

When we come to Samson, it is a very low bar already. When we compare him to Abraham or Samuel, but still God by His grace uses flawed heroes.

How did Samson regain his strength?

I don't think it was about the hair. His hair grew back, but this is the thing **Then Samson called to the LORD and said, "O Lord ¹GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time,**

It was not about the hair, it was him calling on the Lord. The narrator is telling us it is all about the relationship. It is not about the hair. It is not about your gift. It is about your relationship to God. How you use that particular gift?

We can see God in action in King David and apostle Peter. King David and King Saul, Peter and Judas are a nice contrast. King David fell, in fact his sin is worse than Saul. The spirit left Saul and never came back because Saul never repented. David murdered people, had adultery but he came back and repented.

Messing up is a given. Peter betrayed Jesus three times. Judas betrayed one time and he hung himself. Judas never came back. It is not about messing up. Messing up is a given, we all mess up, but the issue is coming back, redemption. We are flawed people and yet despite our flaws God is gracious. Look at what David says,

Psalms 51:1 (ESV) Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

The turning point isn't David, it is God, because God has steadfast love.

(John 21:17 (ESV) 7 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love

me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."
Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep

Each one comes back, God is the hero. Messing up is basically a given. So, we live in a world which is confused. Let me end with Bob Dylan song.

How many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky?
Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry?
Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows That too many people
have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind, The answer is blowin' in the
wind.

It is sad. You look up there and you see people die, you look up in the sky and you wonder why and if you don't believe in Jesus Christ, you are going to be looking for that answer in the wind. That's absolutely sad. Some theologian say, Samson is a prefigure of Christ, you know why, because in the end, Samson pulled down the two pillars and he served Israel by destroying 3000 people.

If Samson is a type of Christ, I would be very upset, because Samson is nowhere near Christ. He lived a life of privilege where he was chosen but on every turn Samson was about himself. It was never about God. Even when he pulled down the two pillars, he was avenging his two eyes. He was totally self-centered. When Jesus Christ at the cross died for all of us. He lived a life completely different. Samson is completely opposite of Jesus Christ, empowered by the spirit and yet he neglected his calling, wasted his life. Jesus called by the spirit, lived for God's people, died for God's people and there was love for his people that drove him to the cross. That's a big difference in our lives.

For many of us today, the challenge is, it doesn't matter where you have been. Maybe some of us have lived a life like Samson, indulging on desires, living for our own desires, but like King David, like Peter, we can come back, and God is merciful, God will come back into our lives.