

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 12B

JUDGES

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION

Be sure your sin will find you out! This truth and warning from the LORD has been frightfully ignored even by God's people that devastating consequences have ensued resulting in shame and a trail of ruined lives. Sin is heinous. It costs our LORD Jesus Christ His life to cleanse us of our sins. A low view of sin will result in a life of sin and profligacy! Samson had been caught by this trap. His life will spiral downward to total destruction as this chapter reveals.

Samson had so much going for him as a Nazarite. He experienced the greatness and power of God in his life through the many episodes of God's deliverance via his supernatural strength. The impact on the lives of the frightened and idolatrous Israelites could have so great and spiritual. All that could have been were thrown to the wind. Samson allowed his sin in particular his lust for women (of the flesh) to ruin his life and hurt the ministry that God gave to him.

This chapter details the end and the beginning of Samson. The

end of his physical life and the beginning of repentance and start of his spiritual life, albeit a very short one. The LORD was merciful to Samson to draw him back unto Himself. The journey was painful but most effective. Parents with wayward children can draw much comfort from this that though the physical life may be in the depths of ruination but God can reach out to them and save them unto Himself for all eternity.

Wayward children of God must learn not to take the patience and long suffering of God for granted as if they will last forever. They don't. There is an end to His long suffering and patience. When that end is reached, the sin is full, and judgement follows. Christian or not, God will judge equitably and justly, He is no respecter of persons. He never has been nor ever will be.

OUTLINE

1. Samson lusts a harlot – 16:1-3;
2. Samson lusts Delilah -- 16:4-17;
3. Samson lost His sight – 16:18-20;
4. Samson prays to the LORD -- 16:21- 31.

COMMENTARY

Samson lusts a harlot – 16:1-3

Samson's entire reign as judge was 20 years (see 15:20 and 16:31). It is therefore not correct to say that there is a gap of 20 years between chapters 15 and 16. What he did here

would be the tail end of this period of 20 years for at the end of this chapter, Samson would die.

Samson went down to Gaza, which was the largest city of all the fortified cities of the Philistines. In that city, he saw a prostitute, and went in unto her, meaning that he had a sexual relationship with her. The Philistines were alerted that Samson was in town. God will use Samson's sin to destroy the Philistines inside their largest and greatest city.

They hated him. So, they found this a great opportunity to subdue and kill him. They set a watch over him in the prostitute's house and surrounded the only gate in and out of the city. They were confident that they had trapped Samson. For some reason, whether they were careless or asleep during their watch, Samson managed to leave the city at midnight. The massive gate could not stop him. Once again, he demonstrated superhuman strength. He lifted the gate out of its posts and carried it "to the top of an hill that is before Hebron" (16:3). The phrase can either mean that he walked the 30 miles to Hebron or he went to a hill which was towards the direction of Hebron. Whichever way it is understood, the fact remains that Samson showed tremendous supernatural strength.

It also showed that Samson was over confident. He depended too much on his physical strength and believed that he was invincible. To

stand on a hill with the gates of this great city on his shoulders was to emphasize his great strength and mockery over his enemies' futile attempts in killing him. He had no fear at all for his enemies as his many past victories had probably filled him with self-confidence.

But he had one fatal sinful weakness, an insatiable sexual lust. This opening portion of Chapter 16 provides the background for Samson's eventual downfall and subsequent death.

Samson lusts Delilah -- (16:4-17)

Samson met a woman in the valley of Sorek by the name of Delilah. The meaning of her name is "feeble" though that belies her true character – crafty, deceitful, greedy and wicked. Delilah must have been an attractive woman, at least to Samson. The lords of the five major Philistine cities must have learned that Samson was having an affair with her. They came to her and offered her a large sum of money: each one of the lords would give her 1,100 pieces of silver (a total of 5,500 pieces which was a king's ransom) if she could find out and tell them the source of Samson's strength.

That was a very large sum of money in those days. Delilah could retire for the rest of her life in luxurious living. Delilah agreed to betray the man who loved her. It is not told that Samson and Delilah were married.

They were probably not as Delilah was a high class courtesan.

The account of Samson's downfall can be traced to his pride and self-confidence believing that his super strength was from within himself. He failed to acknowledge that it came from the LORD and the LORD could very easily take it away anytime. Samson knew the secret of his strength. However, when Delilah asked him specifically where his strength lay, he teased her by telling her to tie him with seven green fresh reeds. And when she shouted that the Philistines were upon him, Samson broke off the reeds. Delilah charged Samson for mocking and lying to her, and again asked him the same question. Samson again teased her by saying that if he were bound with new ropes he would be powerless. But this also did not work. Although she was mocked again by Samson, she persisted and once more asked him for the secret of his strength.

This time Samson's answer was dangerously near the truth. He said that if she weaved seven locks of his hair, he would be a weakling (16:13). Samson was playing with fire now. Again when Delilah pretended and shouted that the Philistines were upon him, Samson woke up from his sleep and fled. Thrice, Samson had teased and tricked her. One can be sure that Delilah would use all her female and persuasive charm to get the truth out of Samson.

This time she used the strategy of love to disarm Samson. She kept on pressuring him daily, and like the drop of water which constantly falls on a granite and eventually makes a dent, Samson's "soul was vexed unto death" so that he told her "all his heart" (16: 16, 17).

Samson lost His sight – 16:18-20

When Delilah realised that this time he was telling the truth, she sent for the lords of the Philistines. The lords came bringing with them the money as agreed.

Samson came to see Deliah as on any other day. This time Delilah "made him sleep on her knees." When Samson was fast asleep, she called a man to shave off the seven locks of his hair. She shouted the usual warning. Samson woke up saying that he would escape as at other times, not knowing "that the LORD was departed from him" (16:20).

This last statement was the saddest revelation in the account of Samson. All along, the LORD had been gracious to him. He first broke his Nazarite vow by coming into contact with a dead body, yet the LORD did not take away his strength. Then he got drunk which he should not, and the LORD again did not take his strength away. One more outward requirement of his Nazarite vow still remained until now. It was his hair,

and when that was gone, the LORD departed from him. He became like any other man. He had broken all his Nazarite vows — one who was consecrated to the LORD for His use and glory.

Samson was very foolish. He was a victim of his own pride, over-confidence, thinking that he could overcome any temptation. He could have fled from Delilah the moment she demanded from him the secret of his strength. He had two chances to flee from temptation but he did not, preferring to indulge in teasing her instead. Finally, he succumbed with fatal consequences. The women whom Samson chose to spend his time with destroyed his life. His weak and carnal character was revealed by his sins and profligate life. Indeed, nothing shapes a person's character more than the people with whom we choose to associate with. The Bible teaches, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Corinthians 15:33)

Samson Prays to the LORD – 16:21-31

The Philistines took him, gouged out his eyes, bound him with locked metal chains and humiliated him by making him to grind corn in the prison house (16:21). What a pitiful sight! In the following verse, the first word "howbeit" intimates a turning-point or a promise of hope. Samson's

hair began to grow. It was a sign that the LORD had not entirely forsaken him and that His plan and purpose had yet to be completed through him.

The Philistines had a great gathering to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to their god Dagon and to celebrate their victory over Samson, a victory they attributed to Dagon. The LORD God is not mocked (Galatians 6:7). At one juncture of their celebration, they called for Samson to be brought out and made sport of. Samson was ridiculed and humiliated. Then they placed him between the two main pillars which supported the house where the people were gathered. The gathering in this public place comprised all the lords of the Philistines, their women folk and a further 3,000 men and women in the gallery.

A lad was made to lead Samson who asked him to bring him to a spot between the two pillars where he could feel them. Samson prayed to the LORD. In the time of his imprisonment, he had learned his lesson the hard way. This was his prayer: "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." (16:28) He used "Lord" meaning "Master" to address God instead of "LORD" the covenant name of God, suggesting that he did not think that he was worthy to remind

the LORD of His covenant promise to the children of Israel.

Samson was repentant having reflected on his life in prison. He pleaded for mercy and asked God for a last favour to give him the strength to take vengeance on the Philistines. This was the second prayer in his life. The LORD God heard him and answered by giving him the strength he wanted. He asked God to let him die with the Philistines. He bowed himself and with all his might brought the whole house down, the number of people he killed then was more than he ever slew in his lifetime.

Samson was probably born again at this time when he prayed. That a man who lived a profligate and willful life most of his life was converted at the end of his life is surely all of God's grace and mercy. Samson was such an example. **Hebrews 11:32-34** reveals that Samson had genuine faith, *"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."* Never give up hope of salvation for our loved ones. When a

man like Samson who seemed so impossible to be saved could be saved demonstrates the truth that though sin might greatly abound in a sinner's life but grace would much more abound to the glory of God when salvation comes into a sinners heart.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The account of Samson and Delilah is very well-known, even a movie was produced although there are some elements which do not tally with the Biblical account. The important lesson and biblical truth to learn is that *"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall"* (Proverbs 16:18). The life of Samson illustrates this truth. Many Christians have fallen because of pride and over-confidence in trifling with temptations and little sins. It always seems to start "innocently" but soon they are taken captive and ultimately their spiritual life is destroyed. Beware, for he who thinks that he is able to stand, should take great care lest he falls.

Forgetting God in our daily life and that He is the Sustainer and Provider of all things in life is a very dangerous lapse of gratitude. Samson fell into this trap. He was endowed with much from the LORD. But he did not for one moment (until the very end) acknowledge or recognise that it was the LORD who had given him his gift of strength. He might have been

born with it since birth, but it was from the LORD nonetheless. Every sinner and believer must realize that even his talent comes from God. He might think that he is born with it such as a high IQ or brilliant musical abilities or some artistic skill but ultimately it is God that had given it to him. Do not allow such a gift to blind you to pride and death the way it did to Samson. He lived a wretched and immoral life as a result of this spiritual blindness.

More so when a believer is given a spiritual gift from God, he must learn to lean on God more and not on self. Humility and complete dependence on God to see him through in service and the daily exercise of his gift is indispensable in his walk with the LORD. Samson learned it too late. It was not his long hair that made him strong but the LORD. It was therefore not the cutting of the hair that made him weak but the LORD who took his strength away. The Christian can lose his gift of preaching or teaching or any other gift when he stops praying and leaning on God and he continues to live in sin.

Israel did not ask to be delivered from the Philistines probably due to their increasing success in adapting to the life of captivity. It was very sad that Israel had lost her spiritual significance. Israel was God's nation and God wanted Israel to bear His image and His grace and mercy to a spiritually dead world. Therefore

when Israel was in captivity, the LORD could be seen as weak by the surrounding nations especially the Philistines who had held Israel captive. For the LORD was Israel's God and protector and He will deliver His people according to God's sovereignty as was the case here in the 20 years of Samson judgeship.

Bishop Ambrose made this comment about Samson:

Samson, when brave, strangled a lion; but he could not strangle his own love. He burst the fetters of his foes; but not the cords of his own lusts. He burned the crops of others, and lost the fruit of his own virtue when burning with the flame enkindled by a single woman.

AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Judges 16:1-21; 1 Corinthians 10:12-14; 2 Timothy 6:11.

TUESDAY: Judges 16:22-31; 1 Corinthians 1:27-29; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.

WEDNESDAY: Judges 16:1-31.

THURSDAY: Judges 16:1-31.

FRIDAY: Judges 16:1-31.

Discussion Questions

1. Would Christians go to prostitutes? Would Christians commit fornication or adultery? If they commit either one of the above sins, would they be considered as truly born again? Explain your answer.

2. Are there Samson and Delilah in our churches today? Who are they and what similar sins would they be committing today?

3. Why did Samson not lose his strength earlier until after his hair was cut?

4. What can we learn from Chapter 16:

a) of the folly and fruit of sin

b) of the exultation of God's enemies when His servants fail, and

c) of God's enduring mercy to the penitent?

5. From Samson's prayer in Judges 16:28 and 30, what are the most important things he understood about God's personality and character?

6. What do you think of Samson in 16:6-17?

7. Looking back on Samson's life from its bright beginning to its dark but victorious end, what is it that gives him a place among the true soldiers of the 'good fight of faith'?

8. What do you think was Samson's tragic character flaw which caused his fall?
