

SERIES: **Finding Grace in a Dumpster Fire**

TITLE: **In the Shadow of a broken Samson**

HOOK: Custom Officer and truck driver...it can be easy to miss the obvious

The danger as we approach any biblical text, but especially the 'blockbuster' ones, like Samson, is that all we would see are moral lessons.

Scripture is not *less* than stories on morality, but it is far *more*

The stories in the Bible aren't meant to merely teach naughty people to *behave* better, they're meant to spur sinners to *become* born-again & Spirit-led

and there is a difference: ***Become* > *Behave***

Framework:

- **Overview of Samson's story**
- **Forward view to Jesus' story**
- **3 invitations**

CONTEXT: Ammonites & Philistines oppressing Israelites; Ammonites taken care of, now the Philistines addressed
Samson gets 4 chapters

Each chapter starts with a problem (in this case sin + consequences)-

Judges 13:1 The Israelites **again did what was evil in the Lord's sight**, so the Lord handed them over to the **Philistines** forty years.

God tends to have a promise for every problem (in this case He will raise up a judge)-

Judges 13:2-5 There was a certain man from Zorah, from the family of Dan, whose name was Manoah; his wife was unable to conceive and had no children. ³The angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, "Although you are unable to conceive and have no children, you will conceive and give birth to a son. ⁴Now please be careful not to drink wine or beer, or to eat anything unclean; ⁵for indeed, you will conceive and give birth to a son. You must never cut his hair, because the boy will be **a Nazirite** to God from birth, and **he will begin to save Israel from the power of the Philistines.**"

Nazarite vow was a *temporary* consecration to God (Numbers 6:1-8) -

No alcohol, not consume anything that come from the grapevine, not cut their hair, not go near a dead body

Samson's parents showed great faith- v.12 & 17 "*When your words come true*"

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

Judges 13:24-25 So the woman gave birth to **a son** and named him **Samson**. The boy grew, and the Lord blessed him. ²⁵Then **the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him** in the Camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

All seems well, but as we've seen, the people did as they pleased

Chapter 14 once again starts with a problem-

Judges 14:1-3 Samson **went** down to Timnah and **saw** a young Philistine woman there. ² He went back and told his father and his mother, “I have seen a young Philistine woman in Timnah. Now get her for me as a wife.” ³ But his father and mother said to him, “Can’t you find a young woman among your relatives or among any of our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines for a wife?” But Samson told his father, “Get her for me. She’s the right one for me.”

The problem: this “savior” is sinful; he’s not devoted, he’s dishonorable- no regard for his Nazarite vow

Judges 14:7-9 Then he went and spoke to the woman, because she seemed right to Samson. ⁸ After some time, when he returned to **marry her**, he left the road to see the lion’s **carcass**, (we’ll go back and see in a moment how it got there) and there was a swarm of bees with honey in the carcass. ⁹ He scooped some honey into his hands and ate it as he went along. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them and they ate it. But he did not tell them that he had scooped the honey from the lion’s carcass.

Samson, the people’s champ, breaks his vows and weds the enemy

But God was providential, and a broken savior won’t stop him from saving His people

Judges 14:4 Now his father and mother did not know this was from the Lord, who wanted the Philistines to provide an opportunity for a confrontation. At that time, the Philistines were ruling Israel.

God can use even our most grievous blunders and wrongdoings

There was a 7-day wedding feast, and Samson tells a riddle and places a bet with the guests- they can’t figure it out

Judges 14:16-19 So Samson’s wife came to him, weeping, and said, “You hate me and don’t love me! You told my people the riddle, but haven’t explained it to me.” “Look,” he said, “I haven’t even explained it to my father or mother, so why should I explain it to you?” ¹⁷ She wept the whole seven days of the feast, and at last, on the seventh day, **he explained it to her, because she had nagged him so much**. Then she explained it to her people. ¹⁸ On the seventh day, before sunset, the men of the city said to him: What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion? So he said to them: If you hadn’t plowed with my young cow, you wouldn’t know my riddle now! ¹⁹ The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on him, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men. He stripped them and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. In a rage, Samson returned to his father’s house

God providentially utilized Samson to begin to save His people, even despite Samson being Samson!

New chapter, new problem-

Judges 15:1-3 Later on, during the wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat as a gift and visited his wife. “I want to go to my wife in her room,” he said. But her father would not let him enter. ² “I was sure you hated her,” her father said, “so I gave her to one of the men who accompanied you. Isn’t her younger sister more beautiful than she is? Why not take her instead?” ³ Samson said to them, “This time I will be blameless when I harm the Philistines.”

Samson’s mad and he retaliates

(we’ll see in a moment what he did, and how God was still saving His own despite samson’s self-centeredness)

Judges 15:6-7 Then the Philistines asked, “Who did this?” They were told, “It was Samson, the Timnite’s son-in-law, because he took Samson’s wife and gave her to his companion.” So the Philistines went to her and her father and burned them to death. ⁷ Then Samson told them, “Because you did this, I swear that I won’t rest until I have taken vengeance on you.”

It’s what he’s supposed to be doing anyway!

Judges 15:4-5 So he went out and caught three hundred foxes. He took torches, turned the foxes tail-to-tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. ⁵Then he ignited the torches and released the foxes into the standing grain of the Philistines. He burned the piles of grain and the standing grain as well as the vineyards and olive groves.

The enemies' crops are destroyed

Judges 15:8 He tore them limb from limb and then went down and stayed in the cave at the rock of Etam.

The Lord's warrior is finally fighting the Lord's enemies'

After this the Philistines raid and plunder an Israelites town in search for Samson.

Some of the Israelites go to get him and hopefully stop this oppression against them.

Judges 15:12-17 They said to him, "We've come to tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines."

Then Samson told them, "Swear to me that you yourselves won't kill me." ¹³"No," they said, "we won't kill you, but we will tie you up securely and hand you over to them." So they tied him up with two new ropes and led him away from the rock. ¹⁴When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came to meet him shouting. **The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on him**, and the ropes that were on his arms and wrists became like burnt flax and fell off. ¹⁵He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand, took it, and killed a thousand men with it. ¹⁶Then Samson said: With the jawbone of a donkey I have piled them in heaps. With the jawbone of a donkey I have killed a thousand men. ¹⁷When he finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone and named that place Jawbone Hill.

So far, our hero has proven to be more of an anti-hero.

If I'm honest, I am uncomfortable with him & I find I'm uncomfortable with God's relentless grace

Judges 15:18-19 He became very thirsty and called out to the Lord, "You have accomplished this great victory through your servant. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" ¹⁹So God split a hollow place in the ground at Lehi, and water came out of it. After Samson drank, his strength returned, and he revived....

Samson is unfit to save, but God is not

New chapter, new problem-

Judges 16:1 Samson **went** to Gaza, where he **saw** a prostitute and went to bed with her

He's again in enemy territory, not fighting them, but being intimate with them.

They plot to capture him in the morning-

Judges 16:3 But Samson stayed in bed only until midnight. Then he got up, took hold of the doors of the city gate along with the two gateposts, and pulled them out, bar and all. He put them on his shoulders and took them to the top of the mountain overlooking Hebron.

First attempt to trap him failed. Yet the enemy is persistent

Judges 16:4 Some time later, **he fell in love** with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the Sorek Valley

Christian philosopher & theologian of the 3rd and 4th century, Augustine, wrote of something he called

"Disordered Loves" - Augustine believed that the root of sin is not simply loving the wrong things, but rather loving the right things (like material goods, sexual pleasure, or even one's own reputation) in an improper or excessive way, leading to a misalignment with God's will and a disordered soul.

Samson loves Delilah, but Delilah does not love him- she's offered a huge amount of money to find out his secret

Judges 16:6 So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me, where does your great strength come from? How could someone tie you up and make you helpless?"

3 times he toys with her and gives her wrong ways he can be made weak; each time after he falls asleep she tries it, and each time he breaks free

Judges 16:15-21 "How can you say, 'I love you,'" she told him, "when your heart is not with me? This is the third time you have mocked me and not told me what makes your strength so great!" ¹⁶**Because she nagged him day**

after day and pleaded with him until she wore him out,¹⁷ he told her the whole truth and said to her, “My hair has never been cut, because I am a Nazirite to God from birth. If I am shaved, my strength will leave me, and I will become weak and be like any other man.”¹⁸ When Delilah realized that he had told her the whole truth, she sent this message to the Philistine leaders: “Come one more time, for he has told me the whole truth.” The Philistine leaders came to her and brought the silver with them.¹⁹ Then she let him fall asleep on her lap and called a man to shave off the seven braids on his head. In this way, she made him helpless, and his strength left him.²⁰ Then she cried, “Samson, the Philistines are here!” When he awoke from his sleep, he said, “I will escape as I did before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the Lord had left him.²¹ The Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles, and he was forced to grind grain in the prison.

Our warrior savior is in trouble- what 1,000 men could not do, the lap of Delilah did.

But as relentless as her deception was, God’s grace is even more relentless

Judges 16:22 But his hair began to grow back after it had been shaved.

The Philistines throw a party at the temple of their God Dagon; They decide to bring their trophy of victory out, Samson. But they did not know Samson was destined to be a trophy for God’s grace.

Judges 16:27-28 The temple was full of men and women; all the leaders of the Philistines were there, and about three thousand men and women were on the roof watching Samson entertain them.²⁸ He called out to the Lord, “Lord God, please remember me. Strengthen me, God, just once more. With one act of vengeance, let me pay back the Philistines for my two eyes.”

Samson’s 3-fold plea: Remember me (helpless), Strengthen me (humble), Payback (still all about Him)

Judges 16:29-30 Samson took hold of the two middle pillars supporting the temple and leaned against them, one on his right hand and the other on his left.³⁰ Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines.” He pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the leaders and all the people in it. And those he killed at his death were more than those he had killed in his life.

At last the Philistine leaders are destroyed and the temple to this demon god is destroyed

Rather than teasing out the moral lessons we can glean from Samson, I want us to see how this is all part of the greater story of the Bible, and how ultimately this is about the true Savior, Jesus.

- **Manoah & his wife offered a sacrifice to God;**
Jesus offered Himself as sacrifice (Hebrews 9:15)
- **A barren woman was promised she’d conceive a son, Samson;**
a virgin woman was promised she’d conceive a son, Jesus (Isaiah 7:14)
- **Samson tore a lion apart;**
Jesus was torn apart by lions (Psalm 22:13)
- **Samson defiled himself;**
Jesus took on our defilement (1 Peter 2:24)
- **Samson gave in to temptation;**
Jesus was tempted yet overcame (Hebrews 4:15)
- **Samson stripped his enemies of their robes;**
Jesus was stripped of His by His enemies (Matthew 27:28)
- **Samson beat his enemies with his fists;**
Jesus was beat by His enemies fists (Luke 22:63)

- Samson avenged his wife through violence;
Jesus redeemed his bride, the church, through sacrifice (Ephesians 5:25)
- Samson hid in a stone cave;
Jesus was buried in a tomb cut into a stone (Luke 23:53)
- On the hill of the jawbone Samson slay his enemies;
On the hill of the skull His enemies slain Jesus (Matthew 27:33)
- Samson thirsted and was refreshed;
Jesus thirsted and was ridiculed (John 19:28)
- Samson went to bed with a prostitute;
Jesus went to the cross for her (1 Peter 3:18)
- In strength, Samson carried the city gates on his shoulders;
In weakness, Jesus carried the cross on His (John 19:17)
- Samson was arrogant and violent;
Jesus was humble and meek (Matthew 11:29)
- Samson unwillingly became weak like any other man;
Jesus willingly took on flesh & became a man (Hebrews 2:14)
- Due to his sin, the Lord left Samson;
due to our sin, the Father abandoned Jesus (Mark 15:34)
- Samson recklessly broke God's rules;
Jesus fulfilled them (Matthew 5:17)
- Between two columns Samson stretched out his arms to avenge himself;
Between two criminals Jesus stretched out His hands to give Himself (Isaiah 49:16)
- Samson reigned 20 years, died and was buried;
Jesus died, was buried, but resurrected and reigns forevermore (Revelation 11:15)

Main Point: In the shadow of the broken Samson with arms outstretched,
is Jesus Christ, the Savior, with arms stretched out,
inviting all the Samsons of the world into His welcoming embrace

If God did not give up on Samson, He will not give up on you either

Chad Bird: Samson

Samson was a big, strong man,
A big, strong man was he.
He killed a lion with his hands
Like one would squash a flea.
With but a donkey's jawbone
He whacked a thousand men
And iced yet even more
When foes set fire to kin.
He trapped three hundred foxes
And set their tails ablaze
And though men gouged his eyes out
Their temple Samson razed.
But Samson was a small, weak man,
A small, weak man was he.

Just one hot-bodied damsel
Could squash him like a flea.
A rendezvous of passions
Would make his manhood rise
While limp his soul would plummet
Betwixt her willing thighs.
That chink in Samson's armor,
Of hips and lips and breast,
Is a hole through which the blade
Has pierced the church's best.

Samson was a strong, weak man,
A strong, weak man was he,
But erect betwixt two pillars
This blind man came to see.

******CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM*

3 Invitations:

Not -yet following Jesus:

Be born again. Become

“Lord Jesus, I am a sinner, I repent, be my Savior today”

If you’ve done that, the next step is to **Be baptized**

A show of *obedience & allegiance*

Born-again:

Behold your Christ.

Partake of the Lord’s table-

remember His sacrifice & that He will return

BULPEN-

A customs officer observes a truck pulling up at the border. Suspicious, he orders the driver out and searches the vehicle. He pulls off the panels, bumpers, and wheel cases but finds not a single scrap of contraband, still suspicious but at a loss to know where else to search, he waves the driver through.

The next week, the same driver arrives. Again the official searches, and again finds nothing illicit.

Over the years, the official tries full-body searches, X rays, and sonar, anything he can think of, and each week the same man drives up, but no mysterious cargo ever appears, and each time, reluctantly, the customs man waves the driver on.

Finally, after many years, the officer is about to retire. The driver pulls up. "I know you're a smuggler," the customs officer says. "Don't bother denying it. But darned if I can figure out what you've been smuggling all these years. I'm leaving now. I swear to you I can do you no harm. Won't you please tell me what you've been smuggling?"

The driver says, "Trucks"

Numbers 6:1-8 The Lord instructed Moses, ²“Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When a man or woman makes a special vow, a Nazirite vow, to consecrate himself to the Lord, ³he is to abstain from wine and beer. He must not drink vinegar made from wine or from beer. He must not drink any grape juice or eat fresh grapes or raisins. ⁴He is not to eat anything produced by the grapevine, from seeds to skin, during the period of his consecration.

⁵“You must not cut his hair throughout the time of his vow of consecration. He may be holy until the time is completed during which he consecrates himself to the Lord; he is to let the hair of his head grow long. ⁶He must not go near a dead body during the time he consecrates himself to the Lord. ⁷He is not to defile himself for his father or mother, or his brother or sister, when they die, while the mark of consecration to his God is on his head. ⁸He is holy to the Lord during the time of consecration.

Being strong in one area does not make up for utter sin in other areas

led by passion rather than conviction; self-indulgence rather than self-discipline

“Samson’s life is an example for us that God is faithful, loving, and kind even when we’re stuttering and stumbling through the life and work he gives us. But even when we fail miserably, as Samson does more than once, and even when we’re defeated by our own morally bankrupt, self-destructive decisions, God remains true to his promise. The God of Israel vindicates us with his judgements. He’s merciful even when we’re merciless.”

-Donavon Riley

Samson has to have everything taken from him, even his sight, before he realizes that God has been his "strength and shield" all along.

When we look at stories in the bible such as these, we have to be careful not to simply pull out the moral lessons. Yes, those are there, let's learn from them. But there is a bigger, a better story being unfolded. That story and those lessons only become evident through the lens of the cross.

If we can get past Sunday School moralizing what we discover in the Old Testament are thirty nine books about remarkably immoral people loved by a promise-keeping, gift-giver God.... The Bible doesn't invite us in to search for examples of self-salvation. It reveals a God who pursues the godless. Every word of Scripture testifies to God's work for sinners. God running the verbs of salvation. God creating faith and life where before there was none. And

as Jesus says, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, but it is they that bear witness about me..." ([John 5:29](#)) Every page of the Old Testament proclaims "Christ! Christ!"

-Donavon Riley

"Delilah's razor, which she intended for evil, God intended for good. Little did this woman realize it, but her razor carved for Samson a blessed cross. This is what faith sees. Samson suffered greatly, especially in the violent removal of his eyes. But in his blindness, Samson came to see. In his enslavement, he became a free man. While being mocked, Samson came to glory. And in his sacrificial death, he brought life and liberation to the Israelites as he overthrew the enemies who oppressed them...In Samson's story is our own story: the story of children who stray, but whom the Father pursues down mile after mile of grace, to finally bring them home. We live by faith in that Father, who gives us eyes to see ourselves and others as we truly are, as the chosen brothers and sisters of Christ."

-Chad Bird