



Compromise

SAMSON’S PHYSICAL STRENGTH COULD NOT SAVE HIM FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS WEAK MORAL CHARACTER.

JUDGES 16:16-31

Parents, grandparents, teachers, and anyone who has spent time with young children recognize the importance of teaching the concept of cause and effect. The idea is that for every cause there is an effect and that for every effect there was a cause. In other words, there are consequences to every person’s thoughts, behaviors, and actions. In the Bible, Samson is one example among many who suffered the consequences of a weak moral character.

 **How has understanding the principle of cause and effect influenced the choices you make in life?**

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

JUDGES 13:1-21:25

The concluding nine chapters of the book of Judges contain two sections. The first is an account of Samson, the last of the judges (Judg. 13:1-16:31). It begins with his unusual birth. The angel of the Lord appeared to his barren mother and informed her that she and her husband would have a son and that they must raise him as a Nazirite (13:2-7). This meant that he was not to consume anything derived from the grapevine, he was to abstain from alcohol, his hair was never to be cut, and he was to avoid contact with any corpse (Num. 6:1-21). The Spirit of the Lord stirred Samson, and he was a judge in Israel for twenty years (Judg. 13:25; 15:20).

Samson, however, had a flawed character and kept the wrong company. Despite his parents' protests, he demanded that they arrange for him to marry a young Philistine woman in Timnah. On his way there, Samson killed an attacking lion with his bare hands, later returned to it, and scooped honey out of its carcass. He kept this secret from his parents because it was a violation of his Nazirite vow.

He married the Philistine woman, but after she betrayed his trust, her father had her marry someone else. When Samson learned what his father-in-law had done, he exacted revenge on the Philistines. He burned up their grain, vineyards, and olive groves, and then killed one thousand of their men with the jawbone of a donkey (14:1-15:20).

Next, Samson became romantically involved with another woman, Delilah. This account is the focus of this week's study.

The last section of the book of Judges (17:1-21:25) contains two accounts that, taken together, describe what some have called the "Canaanization of Israel" because the Israelites behaved as wickedly as the Canaanites did. Israel's behavior was characterized by political, civil, moral, and spiritual chaos as "everyone did whatever seemed right to him" (21:25).



As you read Judges 16:16-31, identify the sins Samson committed.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

STRENGTH DEPARTED (JUDG. 16:16-20)

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.

VERSE 16

Judges 16:4 introduces Delilah, whose name means “flirt,” stating that Samson “fell in love” with her. When the five Philistine governors learned of this, they saw it as a possible opportunity to capitalize on Samson’s vulnerability. Therefore, they went to Delilah to convince her to persuade Samson to reveal the source of his tremendous strength so that they could take him captive. If she did this, each leader promised to give Delilah 1,100 pieces of silver—5,500 in all.

Consequently, Delilah asked Samson, “How could someone tie you up and make you helpless?” (v. 6). He made up different false ways it could happen (vv. 7,11,13). After trying each of them and failing, Delilah questioned Samson’s love for her. She failed to realize he was already bound by his love for her. Also, Delilah was committed to getting her silver. So ***she nagged him day after day and pleaded with him***. The Hebrew word translated *nagged* literally means “to torment, oppress, and harass.” Delilah relentlessly nagged Samson until ***she wore him out***, literally “to being just short of death.” Samson had now allowed himself to be taken advantage of twice because of his relationships with the wrong kind of women.

VERSE 17

Because of Delilah's constant nagging, Samson ***told her the whole truth***. This was in response to her accusation in verse 15, when she said to him, "your heart is not with me." Another reason Samson told her his secret was apparently because he loved her (v. 4). His strength came from his relationship with God as a Nazirite from birth. His hair was not to be cut as one of the signs of his special calling of God—his separation to God. It is surprising Samson told her of the vow, because up to this point it seemed as if Samson did not take his vow seriously.

Also noteworthy is Samson's statement, ***I will become weak and be like any other man***. Perhaps this is a third reason he confided in Delilah. He wanted to be rid of the expectations and burden of God's call upon his life and be like any other man. This seems incredible, but given that Delilah had acted on all of the false claims Samson had made about the source of his strength, he surely must have known she would act on this one too. It is as if he was inviting her to cut his hair. Maybe he wanted to settle down with Delilah and live according to his own desires. After all, Samson never made the Nazirite vow to the Lord himself. It was placed upon him before he was born. Whatever Samson was thinking, he was tragically mistaken. Even if Samson expected Delilah to cut his hair, he could not have predicted everything that happened to him next.

VERSES 18-20

This time ***Delilah realized that he had told her the whole truth***. She was so confident she knew the whole truth concerning the source of Samson's strength that she sent for the ***Philistine leaders*** to come. It is noteworthy that she was not going to do anything to Samson until they came. She had to be sure they would deal with Samson after she had betrayed him. Furthermore, the Philistine leaders obviously believed Delilah because they came to her and brought with them her immense reward of silver.

In the course of events, Samson fell asleep as he had done before (v. 14). He slept while the enemy was in the next room. Ready for the opportunity, she had a man waiting close by to ***shave off*** Samson's ***seven braids*** of hair. Everything worked perfectly according to Delilah's plan. She finally got the result she desired. She succeeded in making Samson ***helpless*** as ***his strength left him*** while he slept. Yes, Delilah made Samson helpless, but Samson put himself into the situation that brought all of it on.

When believers entwine themselves with unbelievers, they become spiritually vulnerable. Paul wrote, “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (1 Cor. 15:33). What happened to Samson should remind believers that we have an enemy, the devil, who is seeking our ruin. Learning from Samson’s mistakes, we must not drop our guard but be sober-minded and vigilant (1 Pet. 5:8).

As she had done before, Delilah cried out, ***Samson, the Philistines are here!*** As before, the Philistines were in the next room waiting to ambush Samson (vv. 9,12). This time, when he awoke from his sleep and said, ***I will escape as I did before and shake myself free,*** it did not happen.

Samson ***did not know that the LORD had left him.*** It is notable that it was not really Samson’s hair that had given him his power. It was the Lord Himself. Samson’s uncut hair was a sign of his vow to God, an indicator of the Spirit of the Lord’s power that had stirred within him (13:25). So, the statement that the Lord had left Samson means that the Lord withdrew His strength from Samson. However, it did not mean that the Lord had altogether abandoned him. While believers will experience His discipline, the Lord will never forsake His people.



How can the people with whom we choose to associate impact our ability to remain faithful to God?

SAMSON DEFEATED (JUDG. 16:21-25)

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.** ²² **But his hair began to grow back after it had been shaved.** ²³ **Now the Philistine leaders gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon. They rejoiced and said: Our god has handed over our enemy Samson to us.** ²⁴ **When the people saw him, they praised their god and said: Our god has handed over to us our enemy who destroyed our land and who multiplied our dead.** ²⁵ **When they were in good spirits, they said, “Bring Samson here to entertain us.” So they brought Samson from prison, and he entertained them. They had him stand between the pillars.**

VERSES 21-22

Ironically, the man who lived his life by the lust of his eyes had his eyes gouged out. The man who could not be restrained was bound in bronze shackles. The man who proudly went wherever he pleased was now forced to grind grain in prison like an animal. And the man who appeared to have little regard for others was now humiliated. In many ways, Samson was experiencing personally what the nation of Israel repeatedly experienced during the time of the judges.

However, the story did not end there. At the same time, the Lord was still at work in Samson's life—***his hair began to grow back after it had been shaved***. The Lord was in the process of restoring Samson because He was committed to completing the work in Samson that He had begun. The Lord had called Samson before his birth to be a judge in Israel who would “begin to save Israel from the power of the Philistines” (13:5). God's promise and purpose for Samson had not changed.

KEY DOCTRINE: *God's Purpose of Grace*

Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. (See John 10:27-29; Colossians 1:12-14.)

VERSES 23-25

At the beginning of Samson's narrative in Judges 13:1, the writer indicated the Israelites again did what was literally “the evil” in the Lord's sight. That evil was abandoning the Lord to worship the Baals and other gods of Canaan. ***Dagon*** was a Canaanite god that was tied to the fertility of grains and believed to be the father of Baal. When the Philistines entered Canaan, they adopted Dagon as their patron god. They believed their god had delivered their most feared enemy, Samson, to them. Therefore, they ***gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon*** and praise him for what he had done.

Next, the Philistines decided their gathering would be even more enjoyable if they brought Samson in from prison to ***entertain***. They would amuse themselves at Samson's expense. Archaeological evidence of Philistine temples suggests that the roof and upper story of this large temple were supported by two cedar

pillars set on round stone bases. It would have been between pillars like this where they placed Samson.



What do you think was Samson's greatest loss, and why?

PHILISTINES DESTROYED (JUDG. 16:26-31)

²⁶ Samson said to the young man who was leading him by the hand, “Lead me where I can feel the pillars supporting the temple, so I can lean against them.” ²⁷ 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.” ²⁹ 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. ³¹ Then his brothers and his father’s whole family came down, carried him back, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. So he judged Israel twenty years.

VERSES 26-30

The once mighty Samson was now being led by the hand of a young servant boy. Samson asked the young man to lead him to the pillars supporting the temple so he could *lean against them*. It appears Samson was already thinking about how he could literally take them all down, as there were about three thousand men and women watching what the large crowd of Philistine dignitaries in the main area below them was doing to Samson.

Then Samson *called out to the LORD*. Samson addressed Him as **Lord God**, the Lord’s personal name to His covenant people. First, Samson called upon the Lord to *remember* him. In Hebrew, “remember” is not the opposite of “forget” in English. It means “to be mindful of” or “to act on behalf of.” Second, Samson asked

the Lord to give him the strength to *pay back the Philistines* for gouging out his eyes. His motivation for killing the Philistines was selfish, just as it had been before. Samson was not concerned about the Lord’s reputation or the appalling falsehoods the Philistines were spewing about Dagon. Nor did Samson express concern about the well-being of his own people. In the end, Samson was all about Samson. Therefore, Samson leaned into the pillars supporting the entire temple, and as he prayed that the Lord would let him die with the Philistines, Samson *pushed with all his might*. The entire temple collapsed killing everyone there. In fact, Samson killed more Philistines in that instant than he had killed all together previously.

VERSE 31

Samson may have forgotten his own people, but they did not forget him. Both of his parents apparently were deceased, but his father’s entire family came and retrieved Samson’s body and buried him in his father’s tomb. The statement that Samson *judged Israel twenty years* indicates that even though Samson suffered because of his sinful choices, the Lord nonetheless accomplished His purpose through Samson, which was “to save Israel from the power of the Philistines” (13:5).

 **In light of Samson’s story, how would you counsel someone who is experiencing the consequences of sinful choices?**



BIBLE SKILL: *Memorize a verse and apply it to a real-life situation.*

Memorize Psalm 28:7, then write the verse in your own words. Reflect on ways Samson’s life illustrated this verse and ways that he fell short. Write a brief prayer, asking God to help you trust Him more, celebrate His work in your life, and show gratitude for all He has done.

APPLY THE TEXT

- + Believers should avoid putting themselves in situations that will tempt them to sin.
- + Believers who compromise their faithfulness to God will eventually be put to shame.
- + Believers can be confident that God does not abandon them, in spite of their sin.



How can your Bible study group encourage one another to avoid putting yourselves in situations that will tempt you to sin? In what areas of your lives are you susceptible to being tempted to compromise your faithfulness to God?



When was a time you sinned against God and discovered He did not abandon you? How should you respond to God’s faithfulness to never abandon you in spite of your sin? How does God’s faithfulness to you affect your faithfulness to Him?



Memorize Psalm 28:7.

Prayer Needs