

**THE STONES OF GOD'S WITNESS: PERGAMOS—
LESSONS IN LIVING AT THE END OF DAYS**

**THE DANGER OF THE COMPROMISED
CHRISTIAN: SIN BLINDS, SIN BINDS,
SIN GRINDS**

Sin Destroys but Grace Restores

The God of the 2nd Chance

Samson is a powerful reminder of God's grace. Though he descended into the depths of a lust filled life, wandering far from his calling and consecration – the Lord never let go of him. His soiled life is recorded. His defeats are unvarnished and clear for all to see. But against the backdrop of sin is the beauty of grace. God forgives, God restores, and God uses Samson one final time.

The life of Samson is recorded in God's Word as a picture of the destructive power of sin, and the restoring power of grace. Samson often lived in the lust of the flesh; Samson often walked by the lust of the eyes; Samson often responded with the pride of life. Yet Samson in the final analysis, as God sees His life – is a man of faith. One moment of godly sorrow, leading to a repentant prayer of faith -- at his darkest hour, brought him back to the place of blessing. Marvelous grace of our loving God, grace that exceeds our sin and our shame. If Samson made it – anyone may.

Samson was one of the most amazing Old Testament personages. So many details God captured about his life are unique and profound in their meaning. Here are just a few truths about Samson's life:

- GOD'S ANGELS ANNOUNCE HIS BIRTH: He was one of only three people whose births were announced by angels. Jesus and Isaac are the other two. So he is in the top 1/10 of 1% of all the 3,000 people named in the Bible.
- HIS PARENTS SEEK GOD'S HELP RAISING HIM: His parents rank up there again with the fewest of the few. Only Joseph & Mary, Job, Abraham, Hannah, and Samson's dad Manoah seek for and receive wisdom recorded in God's Word in how to raise their children.
- HE IS CONSECRATED TO GOD FROM BIRTH: Now we are in special territory again. God picked from birth Jeremiah, Samuel, John the Baptist, and Paul. The calling that God placed upon Samson was to be a Nazarite – a person completely given to God for life. To everyone who saw him a clear message was to be heard – This is God's Man. He was to uphold a life long outward sign of his calling by total

abstinence from wine, total avoidance of dead bodies, and uncut hair. The inward response to this calling of obedience was to be a chosen life of pointing to the Lord by obedience. God gave Samson special supernatural strength.

To have grown up with Samson must have been amazing. His neighborhood pals must have stood in wonder at his immense strength. His enemies must have fled quickly. It was like having a one-man army.

As a young man probably in his teens, we get the first indicator that Samson was not going the direction the Lord had pointed him. He begins to live by his desires and not God's. He begins to serve his own lusts and not God's Words. A string of women begin to parade through his life. In fact seven times Samson is guided by the lust of his eyes when he "saw a woman that pleased him". That was a dangerous choice each time. The final, and deadliest woman is Delilah. Her name has become synonymous with lust, deceit, betrayal and ruin. She tries to find the secret of his strength for an enormous bribe. Samson knows it is his hair and in a series of three lies he slowly gives clues.

Spurgeon's summary says it all:

At last¹ he falls into the hands of Delilah. She is bribed with an enormous sum, and she endeavors to get from him the secret of his strength. He foolishly plays with his own destruction. At last he lets out the secret, his strength lay in his locks. Not that his hair made him strong; but that his hair was the symbol of his consecration, and was the pledge of God's favor to him.

While his hair was untouched he was a consecrated man; as soon as that was cut away, he was no longer perfectly consecrated, and then his strength departed from him. His hair is cut away; the Philistines begin to oppress him, and his eyes are burned out with hot iron. How are the mighty fallen!

And now he comes to the very city out of which he had walked in all his pride with the gates and bolts upon his shoulders; and the little children come out, the lower orders of the people come round about him, and point at him - "Samson, the great hero, hath fallen! Let us make sport of him!" What a spectacle!

Why, he must be the sport and jest of every passer by, and of every fool who shall step in to see this great wonder - the destroyer of the Philistines made to toil at the mill. That he should have lost his eyes was terrible; that he should have lost his strength was worse; but that he should have lost the favor of God for a while; that he should become the sport of God's enemies, was the worst of all.

Samson is a powerful reminder of God's grace. Though he descended into the depths of a lust filled life, wandering far from his calling and consecration – the Lord never let go of him. His soiled life is recorded. His defeats are unvarnished and clear for all to see. But against the backdrop of sin is the beauty of grace. God forgives, God restores, and God uses Samson one final time. As John MacArthur so eloquently describes:

¹ Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 21st, 1858, by the REV. C. H. SPURGEON at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens. Sermon # 224.

<http://thebible revival.com/teachings/books/0008/0224.htm>

The greatness² of God's grace is seen in His choosing the undeserving to be His people and the unqualified to do His work. It should be a marvelous encouragement to every believer to know that, just as Elijah (James 5: 17), the apostles had a nature like ours. Because there was no other way, God chose to bestow sanctifying grace on those who believe in His Son and by His own power to transform them into men and women of great usefulness.

We are tempted to become discouraged and disheartened when our spiritual life and witness suffer because of our sins and failures. But God picks normal people and pours His grace on them. Satan wants our sins and failures to convince us to give up. But one look at the people of the Bible should defeat that temptation. The work of God is performed by weak individuals like us, surrendered to the God whose power is perfected in man's weakness (2 Cor. 12: 9). God has always had only weak and sinful humans to work with. Listen to the team God has used to win the championships:

- 1. As soon as God delivered Noah and his family through the Flood, Noah became drunk and acted indecently.*
- 2. Abraham, the father of the faithful, doubted God, lied about his wife, and committed adultery with her maid.*
- 3. Isaac told a similar lie about his wife when he thought his life was in danger.*
- 4. Jacob took advantage of his brother Esau's weakness and extorted the birthright from him.*
- 5. Moses was a murderer, and in pride he struck the rock instead of speaking to it as God had instructed.*
- 6. His brother, Aaron, the first high priest, led Israel in erecting and worshiping the golden calf at the very time Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the law from God.*
- 7. Joshua disobeyed the Lord by making a treaty with the Gibeonites instead of destroying them.*
- 8. Gideon had little confidence in himself and even less in God's plan and power.*
- 9. Delilah repeatedly beguiled Samson because of his great lust for her.*
- 10. David committed adultery and murder, was an almost total failure as a father, and was not allowed to build the Temple because he was a man of blood.*
- 11. Elijah stood fearlessly before 450 false prophets but cowered before one woman, Jezebel.*
- 12. Ezekiel was brash, crusty, and quick to speak his mind.*
- 13. Jonah defied God's call to preach to the Ninevites and resented His grace when they were converted through his preaching.*

Apart from the brief ministry of His own Son, the history of God's work on earth is the history of His using the unqualified. The twelve disciples who became apostles were no exception. Even from the human standpoint they had few characteristics or abilities that qualified them for leadership and service. Yet God used those men, just as He did Noah, Abraham, and the others, in marvelous ways to do His work.

The life of Samson is recorded in God's Word as a picture of the destructive power of sin, and the restoring power of grace. Samson often lived in the lust of the flesh;

² From Matthew 10 in MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

Samson often walked by the lust of the eyes; Samson often responded with the pride of life. Yet Samson in the final analysis, as God sees His life – is a man of faith. One moment of godly sorrow, leading to a repentant prayer of faith -- at his darkest hour, brought him back to the place of blessing. Marvelous grace of our loving God, grace that exceeds our sin and our shame. If Samson made it – anyone may.

So tonight, the dangers of compromise, the consequences of wandering from consecrated living, and the wonders of God's grace! All seen in the incredible life of Samson.

- Sampson pictures the consequences of compromise with the world and the flesh
- Experiencing great blessing and strength in one area of our lives does not make up for neglect and weakness in another area of our lives.
- Knowing the presence of God does not automatically overwhelm our will, we must choose to obey or we will disobey!
- God always uses men and women of faith in spite of their failures!

Few accounts in the Bible are as tragic as this one. Here is a man to whom God gave twenty years' time to begin to overcome the enemy, yet in the end, he himself was overcome by the enemy. Samson's history is an illustration of Paul's warning in 1 Cor. 9:27, for Samson was a castaway. Hebrews 11:32 cites him for his faith in God's Word, but apart from this, very little can be said on his behalf. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12, NKJV). Note the steps that led to Samson's sin and tragic end.

SAMSON NEGLECTED (WANDERED FROM) HIS HERITAGE (13): Just think for a moment what God has done, and who you are today. You are a special, unique creation with a purpose from God. God made you exactly as you were born – there were no mistakes in your manufacturing. Then the Lord delivered you to exactly the right home with the right parent(s).

1. A GODLY HOME: Samson was born into a godly home, to parents who believed in prayer. He was God's special gift to them and to the nation. He had a father who prayed, "Teach us what we shall do unto the child" (v. 8; and see v. 12). His parents had a fear of God and tried to instill this same fear in their son. They brought offerings to God and dared to believe His wonderful promises.
2. A GODLY GIFTEDNESS: God gave to Samson a special endowment of the Holy Spirit that made him a conqueror.
3. A GODLY CALLING: God called Samson to be a Nazarite ("separated one"), wholly surrendered to the Lord. According to Num. 6, a Nazarite was never to drink strong drink or touch a dead body; and the mark of his dedication would be his uncut hair.

All of this wonderful heritage the grown Samson despised! Instead of putting himself in God's hands to accomplish his God-given task, he chose to live to please himself. How tragic it is when God gives a young person a wonderful heritage and a great opportunity, and he or she treats it lightly.

SAMSON DISOBEYED HIS PARENTS (14:1–4): One evidence of spiritual decline can be the way we get along with our loved ones.

1. **He decided to go away from the Lord.** “Samson went down...” (14:1) is true both spiritually and geographically. Instead of staying in the borders of Israel, he went into enemy territory and fell in love with a heathen woman.
2. **He decided to ignore God’s rules.** He knew the laws of separation God had given to the Jews, but he chose to ignore them (see Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:3; and 2 Cor. 6:14–18; also Gen. 24:1–4).
3. **He decided he was his own authority.** Note that he *told* his parents; he did not *ask* them. And when they reminded him of God’s law, he defied them. “Get her for me,” he insisted, “for she pleases me well!” It did not bother Samson that his desires displeased his parents. Note that in this instance God mercifully was going to overrule his sin and use it to weaken the Philistines (v. 4). Christian young people need to stop and consider carefully when they find themselves defying godly parents who know God’s Word.

SAMSON COMPROMISED HIS LIFE (14:5–20): In those days, the parents arranged for a marriage, and there was several months time between the engagement and the wedding. When Samson met the lion, God gave him the power to overcome it even though Samson was not walking completely in God’s will. When he came back months later to complete the marriage, he found honey in the carcass of the lion. Numbers 6:6–9 tells us that a Nazarite was never to touch a dead body, but Samson deliberately defiled himself for the sake of the honey! How many Christians today defile themselves just to enjoy a little honey in the carcass of a lion—perhaps a popular book, a movie, or a questionable friendship. Sad to say, Samson passed the sin along to his parents, and then he made a joke about it to entertain his friends! As a Nazarite and a Jew, he had no right to be sharing in a worldly Philistine wedding.

- o 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.” ¹⁷ Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.”
- o James 4:4-8 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”? ⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
- o 1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (Remember how the Apostle John dealt with the infidel apostate Celsius? He ran out of the bath house when he was told Celsius was in there!)

SAMSON IGNORED GOD'S WARNINGS (15): This is a chapter of seeming victories, yet it ends with the "strong man" utterly exhausted for lack of water.

- He burned the fields of the Philistines, but they turned around and burned the house of the woman he had loved (15:6 with 14:15).
- Samson avenged their death, but then his own people turned against him and delivered him to the enemy (vv. 11–13).
- God delivered him, but then God warned him by showing him how weak he was. We find only two prayers of Samson: here, for water (vv. 18–20), and in 16:28, for strength to destroy the Philistines. His parents had been prayerful people, but Samson had not followed their example. God warned him here, but he would not heed the warning.

SAMSON PLAYED WITH SIN (16): Samson had already gotten into trouble with one woman, but now he tried again, this time going deep into enemy territory to Gaza.

- Again, God warned him by allowing the enemy to almost catch him, but Samson still refused to repent. It was then that Delilah came into his life and led him to his doom.
- The Valley of Sorek was near his home, but Samson's heart was already far from God. It shocks us to see this Nazarite sleeping on the lap of a wicked woman, but this is what happens when people choose to go their own way and reject the counsel of loved ones and the Lord.
- Three times Delilah enticed Samson, and three times he lied to her. Each time, the enemy attacked him, so he should have realized he was in danger. But read Prov. 7:21–27 to see why Samson yielded. He was asleep when he should have been awake! Remember the warning Christ gave to Peter in Matt. 26:40–41. Note that each lie Samson told actually took him closer to the truth. How dangerous it is to play with sin.

What was Samson's problem?

1. First, Samson³ was **dominated by lust**. That passion led Samson to desire a Philistine woman as a wife, which was strictly forbidden by God's Law. In addition, that passion led him to liaisons with prostitutes, like the one with the woman Delilah who betrayed him for money.
2. Second, Samson was **driven by pride and revenge**. He was more moved by anger at personal affronts to strike out at the Philistines than he was moved by the suffering of the people he was supposed to lead (cf. 14:19–20; 15:7–8; 16:28).
3. Third, Samson was **defeated by himself**. We can hardly imagine what Samson, with his great strength and godly heritage, might have been. If only he had lived out daily the formal commitment to God expressed in that Nazarite vow.

The rest of the story shows the tragic end of the believer who will not let God have his way with his life. From 16.20 on, Samson does nothing but lose.

1. **Samson loses his hair**, the symbol of his Nazarite dedication; for that dedication had long since been abandoned.

³ Richards, Lawrence O., *The Teacher's Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1987.

2. **Samson loses his strength**, but doesn't even know it until he is overpowered. Judges 16:20 And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" **But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.** How futile it is for the servant of God to try to serve the Lord when out of His will.
3. **Samson loses his sight**, as the Philistines put out his eyes.
4. **Samson loses his freedom**, for they bind him with fetters of brass.
5. **Samson loses his usefulness to the Lord**, for he ends up grinding corn instead of fighting God's battles. What a picture of sin. 1st sin blinds, then sin binds, and finally sin grinds. Ask any person who has lived a life of alcohol, a life of immorality, a life of drugs – they will tell you no matter how alluring it looks, it grinds. And all of this began when Samson despised his blessings and defied his parents!
6. **Samson loses his testimony**, for he was the laughingstock of the Philistines. Their fish-god Dagon, not the God of Israel, was given all the glory.
7. **Samson loses his life**. Samson was a castaway; he had committed sin unto death, and God had to take him off the scene. His loved ones claimed his body and buried him "between Zorah and Eshtaol"—the very place where he had started his ministry (13:25). What about Samson's death? Was it suicide, and was it wrong⁴?

What happened to Samson in New Testament terms? To answer that, and as a warning to every one of us called to life long consecration to the Lord, here is a series of verses that explain to us that there are "sins unto death".

1. CONSECRATED -- ALL NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS ARE CONSECRATED TO THE LORD LIKE SAMSON WAS. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that **your body is the temple** (the Spirit is so specific, we are not the *hieron* 'the whole temple building' but *naos* the Holy of Holies) **of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.
2. ANSWERABLE -- WE WILL ANSWER TO GOD FOR WHAT WE DID WITH OUR BODY. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, **he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.** 1 Corinthians 9:27 But **I discipline my body and bring it into subjection**, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should **become disqualified**.
3. INVOLVED -- GOD WILL NOT STAND BY AS WE SIN. 1 Corinthians 11:30-31 For this reason **many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.** 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

⁴ Some Philistine temples had roofs overlooking a courtyard, above wooden columns planted on stone foundations. The central pillars were set close to furnish extra support for the roof. Here the victory celebration and taunts flung at the prisoner below drew a big crowd. The full strength of Samson, renewed by God, enabled him to buckle the columns. As a result, the roof collapsed and the victory was Israel's, not Philistia's. He died for the cause of his country and his God. He was not committing suicide, but rather bringing God's judgment on His enemies and willing to leave his own life or death to God. He was the greatest champion of all Israel, yet a man of passion capable of severe sin. Still, he is in the list of the faithful (cf. Heb. 11:32). Judges 16 in the John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

4. WARNINGS -- CHASTENING PROVES GOD'S LOVE. Hebrews 12:5-8 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 **For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.**" 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, **then you are illegitimate and not sons.**
5. TOO FAR -- GOING TOO FAR TOO OFTEN WITH SIN WILL BE DEADLY FOR BELIEVERS. 1 John 5:16-17 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. **There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.** 17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.
6. DEAD -- GOD KILLS BELIEVERS WHO WON'T REPENT IN TIME. Revelation 2:22-23 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, **unless they repent of their deeds. 23 I will kill her children with death,** and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Apparently during the grinding at the mill, Samson repented of his sin. God offered him one more chance to act by faith. His hair had begun to grow and Samson remembered his calling. He asked God for strength to win one more victory over the enemy. God answered his prayer, but in defeating others, Samson lost his own life.

Samson illustrates people who have power to conquer others, but who cannot conquer themselves.

- o He could set the Philistine fields on fire, but could not control the fires of his own lust.
- o He could kill an attacking lion, but would not put to death the passions of his own flesh.
- o He could easily break the bonds that men put on him, but the shackles of his own sin gradually grew stronger on his soul.
- o He could have led the nation, he preferred to work independently, and as a result, left no permanent victory behind.
- o He could have been remembered for what he built up, but instead everyone but God only remembers what he destroyed – lions, foxes, fields, gates, soldiers, women's purity, and his own life and ministry.

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